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THOUGH LIFE US DO PART



COME! I CAN'T HAVE YOU STANDING HERE

THOUGH LIFE US DO PART

BY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY
CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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CHAPTER I

As the dog-cart rolled slowly by, a cloud of dust arose like a dry fog, and smothered the porch and the ell where the sign hung. It was a squash-colored house, with chocolate trimmings. It was known among the summer people as the chocolate éclair.

"It stands tew near the road," said Solomon Hops. "It had n't orter, an' it did n't useter. It's them dudes done it. They ride onreasonable. If they was to go of an errand to the store, or meet the men folks to the deepot, or take the fambly to meetin' like decent neighbors orter had—but here they be at it constant an' continual, same as performin' monkeys at a circus. It's like as they'd got to keep a-goin' or lose their job. 'Tain't natur'," added Solomon Hops, severely. "An' when you've said a thing ain't natur', you've done with the subjec'. Blank them dudes!"

Solomon Hops was a "native." He was a lucky native, — past and present owner of shore acres sold, and shore acres unsold, on a scale so colos-

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sal as to make him a magnate in Balsam Groves. No real-estate owner on the Cape could compete with his record. His price per foot was something spoken of with bated breath by guests from Newport entertained in palace "cottages" on the water front. He had realized the chimerical for back lots, and clutched the impossible for cranberry swamps. In his hands extortion had become as subtle as a Borgian poison. He had made a fortune out of the summer people, and was clearly ordained to make several more before he was done with them. But he said "Blank them dudes!" with a fervor which one could call nothing less than religious. He spoke of them scornfully, hated them secretly, received them with cold indifference when they came in May, and missed them candidly when they had left in November. He felt towards them the mingled emotions of a man who has his social superiors at a disadvantage. In his heart he was consumed with a curiosity about them which he never admitted to his own subconsciousness. He would rather have come down a thousand on his best lot.

"Nannie!" called Solomon Hops, "run an' see who was in that yaller tip-cart before it gits clean out o' sight. I kinder thought it was that one on 'em I don't disfavor so much, — the little gentle one. Looked like our doctor along of her; he's

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been out the office quite a spell. But I could n't see through the passel o' dust they kicked up."

Nannie ran out obediently. She was a pretty village girl, with her father's profile (Solomon's features were quite regular) and her mother's eyes. Her mother was dead. Nannie was very well dressed; her white blouse was of a fine material, and her gray cloth skirt fashionably cut and hung. Her figure was light and lithe, and swayed like a sapling as she stood with hand lifted to her eyes to watch the slowly moving but now vanishing dog-cart.

"Yes, father," said Nannie, "that's her. It's Miss Sterling. She has n't got the coachman. Dr. Dane's driving. They're going to the Country Club. They don't seem to be in any particular hurry. I'm afraid he won't get back to supper. That dog with the white shirt front is running after her. She's got a new parasol. It's white, trimmed with plain chiffon — not any lace. She's got on her white organdie. Kathleen told one of the girls she had seven white dresses, and not a piqué among them."

Heavy wheels rolling rapidly thundered up on the State Road and came to an abrupt lurch in front of Solomon Hops's house.

A handsome young fellow, with an irresponsible face, drove the caterer's cart, which was piled with

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ices and boxes of the decorated cakes whose familiar countenances have such a friendly air at afternoon teas.

"That George?" asked Solomon, amiably; he did not complain of George's dust, but sat on the porch and choked in it, with malice to none. George was not a dude. He owned his business, which, however experimental, was an importation from town for the summer months, and acquired a glamour from this fact. George had men enough, but he was apt to do his own driving when his orders led him past Solomon Hops's house. Nannie, blushing prettily, retreated towards her father. But the imported caterer called her back.

"I say, Nan!" George shook his whip at her with a masculine imperiousness, which, it seemed, the girl did not resent. Some of the sweetest women are made that way.

"Oh, go along an' talk with George if he wants ye," said Solomon Hops. And Nannie went. Her father tipped his chair back, and watched her, with a gentle expression touched by an almost child-like trust. Nannie was the belle and heiress of the winter people. Solomon looked at her with a pride which ran its roots deeper than the grip of the oldest oak that struck below the biggest boulder on his most extortionate piece of woodland. He who would have euchred the British Ambassador

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out of a fifty-thousand-dollar check for a five-hundred-dollar lot was a lamb and a rustic in the presence of this girl. Solomon had pronounced views of human society; these had been acquired in Balsam Groves. On divine topics he was vague, not feeling sufficiently familiar with the evidence. But Nannie he understood. He had all the confidence in Nannie that he had lost in himself and his race. His consciousness that he was not intimate with his Creator, and not received at the British Ambassador's, gave him no concern whatever. He had Nannie.

"Nannie is natur'," thought Solomon Hops; "an' when you've said a thing 's natur', you've opened a great subjec'."

"Say! Mr. Hops!" the caterer called from the cart. "The trolley road from Balsam's goin' through. Next season it'll be buzzin' all over the Cape in spite of 'em."

This was a tremendous piece of local news,—the outcome of several years' conflict between the village and the visitors; and the two men, who made their living out of the summer people, exulted instinctively in the disappointment of their customers. Solomon Hops sprang to his feet.

"Blank them dudes!" he cried. "I'm goll-darned glad they're beat!"

George leaned out of his wagon. His black eyes

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wandered over Nannie's blushing face. "Folks say it's goin' to connect as far's Sandasket. You 'n' me we'll take a trip around country some day."

"I'm goll-darned glad!" repeated Solomon Hops.

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On the piazzas of the Country Club it was quite cool, and invited the hot and tired golfers as they came up from the links. The ocean could not be seen from the clubhouse, but his breath was salt on the cheek, and the rhythm of his mighty respiration was distinct to the ear. A generous stretch of fair meadows, redeemed to the brassie, and carefully pruned of natural hazards, appealed softly to the eye. On the meadows the June afternoon was beginning to kneel. The light slanted low. The closely cut grass had taken on the hues belonging only to the month and to the hour; and the leaves of such trees as the axe of the green-keeper had spared quivered under lances of red-gold from what promised to be a gorgeous west. The advancing sunset prepared itself to come richly caparisoned, like an Oriental army.

On the eastern piazza a lady, not young and not a golfer, sat chatting with that kind of smartness which passes for conversation among those in-

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capable of or unaccustomed to it. Her face, which still retained the consciousness of beauty, was crossed with inscrutable purposes,—it was that of a Caucasian sphinx. In a group of people, all of them persons of ease, and many of them people of fortune, she carried the unmistakable indications of great wealth. Many young men and a few young girls surrounded her. She possessed a husband, but he might be said to belong to the choir invisible, being useful chiefly as chancellor of the exchequer and as a figure-head at entertainments—never inconvenient or obtrusive. She was on excellent terms with him, and he was said to admire her. Her name was Marriot, Mrs. Douce Marriot. She was usually called by her own, not her husband's name, and was spoken of in a certain class of clubs as The Deuce.

A man not over thirty-six, but looking much older, plainly not a dilettante, and seeming something foreign to the group, made one of Mrs. Marriot's court on the eastern piazza. He was in a golfing costume, and lounged on the piazza rail gracefully; he twirled a cocktail glass between his fingers as he talked; the glass was but half emptied. Mrs. Marriot, in her sprightly moments, called him The Inquisitor. She was not afraid to call anybody anything. His name was Frost; he was a rising young physiologist, much respected

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in his university. He had a face which would have puzzled any physiognomist not familiar with the profession which has, so far as is known, created the type. It was heavily and mysteriously marked,—lined like the countenance of a very old man. Deep furrows contracted the flesh of his forehead and cheeks; and the outlines of his lips and nostrils ran into unexpected depressions, like defeated soldiers entrapped in a sunken road. One would have found it impossible to say what this man had been meant to be, but there could be no mistake about the thing he had become.

“It is a great sacrifice to make for science,” Mrs. Marriot was saying softly. Douce Marriot was never known to disagree with a man upon his convictions or ambitions. To taunt him to exasperation for a trifle, madden him deftly for a whim, defy him dangerously for an experiment, of course was legitimate and usually successful warfare. But there is a line where men must not be differed from by a woman on peril of her charms, and Mrs. Marriot never crossed that line.

“I was going to say,” added the lady, holding out her glass to be refilled, “that it is a great sacrifice to make for a little science. Does n’t it ever strike you as disproportionate? Not that I would even seem to question the sacredness of your motives.”

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“ Oh, my dear Mrs. Marriot, when you consider the X value of human life, — the immense results of our experiments, — the tremendous possibilities of the future, — the — the — ”

The vivisector had flashed at the spark in her retort, struck just in time to save his attention, for his concentration on her personality had begun to waver; he was now started on an animated presentation of the subject of antitoxin, when his eye caught the glint of a girl's white dress showing through the leaves of the thickly wooded avenue, yet a quarter of a mile away. The girl was in a dog-cart, and advanced but slowly towards the clubhouse. A figure not very familiar to the Country Club sat beside her and held the reins.

Dr. Frost did not finish what he was saying. He got to his feet, and remained silent, with the glass in his fingers, so standing absently before Mrs. Marriot, whom he could not decently desert for no visible reason. He looked suddenly fagged and annoyed, and turned his old-young face towards the west, whose strengthening color struck it sharply.

“ Good heavens! ” cried Douce Marriot, with a little movement of dismay. “ What a sky! Your face is — ” She broke her sentence. The young surgeon, in the strange color of a sky piled with heavy clouds, from under which the light smote

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powerfully, stood painted blood-red as a butcher, from brow to chin.

“How becoming these strange atmospheric effects are to a *man*!” said Mrs. Marriot, caressingly, just in time to save herself.

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Spots of green, of gray, of white, of scarlet, moving on the map of the links, the players came up. Number nine was at its apotheosis. Talk of strokes and brassies, putting and foozling, driving and topping, could be heard from a long distance, — the aggressive tones of the young women outranging the voices of the men. By twos and threes, by quartettes and clusters, the golfers began to close in upon the piazzas; tired and healthy, noisy and happy, — the fortunate youth of a fortunate class and a fortunate shore. The athletic girl was so much in the foreground that she smote the athletic man into a dim perspective. Golf, like death or hunger, is a leveler; and people who did not meet in the same drawing-room might tee off into the same bunker. Socially ranked, these women were all ladies, for the Balsam Country Club belonged to those organizations which, without an apparent consciousness of barriers, the more adroitly preserve them; like the barbed-wire fences set within a foot of boundary lines in deference to the law. But, for whatever reason, these milder

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figures were elbowed out of the picture by the true golf girl.

Her elbows were bare. Her sleeves were rolled to her shoulder. Her blouse, open at the throat and below it, was finished by a man's four-in-hand necktie, with its knot slipped far down. She wore no hat. Her hair, thoroughly tousled, blew into her eyes and strayed in her neck. Her arms were more masculine than those of most of the men of her own class, and as brown as a gardener's. Her face had the hue of a Grand-banker's in the fore-castle at the end of a summer's voyage. Her voice and laughter matched her face and arms. Her movements and gestures were masculine; and she had the air of studying to make them more so. She might have been taken for rather a small man in petticoats — and short petticoats at that. As the girls tramped noisily up the piazza steps, Mrs. Marriot surveyed them with a curious smile.

"It spoils the figure," she observed in an undertone. "I don't regret it." She was too old to play golf; not too old (the more was the marvel) for other less wholesome, less innocent games. She and the golf girls took hold of the ancient and royal sport called life at two extremes.

"Come here, Mab Miller!" cried Mrs. Marriot. Mab Miller came. She was the champion golf girl, and looked it, every masculine inch of her, from

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her bare head to her broad foot. Striding across the piazza, she sat down on the rail; one hand rested on her hip, and her bare elbow protruded at a sharp angle.

"I want to present you—" began Mrs. Marriot. She looked about for Dr. Frost just in time to recall him from an obvious retreat. The young man suffered the introduction without enthusiasm, yet not without a certain interest which might be called scientific curiosity.

Mab Miller spoke in a contralto verging on the bass, and held her hand straight out like a man. The surgeon's eye traveled leisurely up and down the golf girl's brown arm.

"Fine deltoid," he thought. "How beautifully it would demonstrate!"

"I want a gin fizz," observed Miss Miller. Dr. Frost bowed, and without comment ordered the nectar required by this modern Hebe. But the champion did not call for more than one gin fizz. She was quite temperate. She was as careful as a prize-fighter in training.

As much could not be said of one very pretty blonde girl, exquisitely dressed, and formed in every movement and accent on the standards of social life which we call fashionable for lack of a more definite term, and Mrs. Marriot turned upon her.

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"Tracie Benton, come here! Sit down by me," whispered Douce Marriot, with a curl of her full lip. Mrs. Marriot knew quite well when to check her own convivial instincts. She knew where to stop in everything; which, perhaps, was the worst of it.

By a single, subtle motion of her lace parasol she made a prisoner of the blonde girl in a piazza chair beside herself — an impulse of good feeling with which Douce Marriot was not unendowed. "One must atone, at times," she thought quizzically. "I've matched a vivisector and a golf champion. That's sin enough on my soul for one day. Now I'll see Tracie Benton home to her mother."

At this moment a remarkably beautiful dog bounded up the piazza steps, and stopped, looking to see why the people whom he owned were so slow to follow. He was a collie, of a pure breed, finely marked; black, with tan paws and cheeks, and white breast, where the waving hair, which Nannie had called a shirt front, stood straight out like a frill on an old-fashioned gentleman. A scar, high on the forehead, was noticeable, but did not disfigure him. His eyes were fine and full of dignity; his whole mien and expression were noble.

"Look here, Clyde!" A man's voice (a merry one) spoke from the dog-cart which had just driven

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up. "You're too well born and well bred to precede a lady."

"Clyde shall do just as he wants to," replied a laughing girl. "He always does. He's born that way. He *never* would follow." She had a lovely, one might say a lovable laugh; and her voice had the charm of a lost art. One hardly knew how to define it, beyond saying that it charmed, until one had seen the speaker. Then you perceived that she could have had no other voice and existed. Many voices are adaptable, like clothes, and may come off or on the individual at the command of the type. This girl's tone and accent were inalienable. She ran up the steps with the ease of perfect health and bubbling happiness, and stood a moment as if a little uncertain of her next movement, her profile turned towards her companion, who was delayed in giving the trap to the club groom.

The collie, without deigning a glance at the people on the piazza, had leaped down the steps and gone back to the trap.

"You honor us, Miss Sterling," said Douce Marriot, turning her head with a singular expression.

The slight phrase, with a half-concealed scoff in it, seemed somehow to carry more weight than it was meant to hold, and bent beneath it, like an overlaid tree.

There were vines on the club piazza — wood-

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bine, clematis, and the usual things; by somebody's graceful fancy they had been allowed to hang abundantly at the eastern entrance, and fell from the arch uncut, like a green portière. Cara Sterling put this aside with her hands, as if it had been lace. She stood against the swaying curtain of the vines, holding it back a little, daintily, that she might not bruise a tendril or hurt the feelings of a bud. There was something quaint and old-fashioned about her figure, in her high-throated organdie, with her white gloves and plain shade hat wound by white silk, and the filmy sunshade in her hand. Only an eminent modiste could have fitted that gown, but Miss Sterling did not wear it like a fashionable woman; she wore it like a lovely girl. The first impression that she made was one of whiteness and fineness; the sense of her beauty came afterwards.

Her gray eyes swept the piazza group with a clear glance; included Douce Marriot, to whose salutation she replied more courteously than cordially, touched the champion, the surgeon, and the Benton girl, and, slightly darkening, assumed a perplexed depth and brilliance, which, although it lived no longer than a ray from a moving mirror, had something memorable in it. She looked the very blossom and promise of essential womanhood; gently modulated, with a candid modesty

of demeanor characteristic of a past rather than of the present time. She seemed, in very truth, to "honor" the Country Club; as if a fixed and peaceful ideal had been confronted with a mass of stormy, struggling facts.

"Gee whiz!" said the champion under her breath. "Great Scott!" She stopped swinging her feet, and got down from the piazza rail. Dr. Frost stood gloomily, with averted face; his color had changed, and all the lines in his forehead and cheeks were expressed in gray.

"Ah," observed Mrs. Marriot, softly, "it seems we are to have the village doctor."

The gentleman who came up the piazza steps and joined Miss Sterling with an apology—something about the groom—was a restless, attractive young man, undeniably handsome, and possibly a person of force. He lacked the *je ne sais quoi* which is the complexion of inherited wealth and ease, and he was not very well dressed; but he carried himself with a debonair manner and a sturdy respect for his own individuality, which it was impossible to set aside. He was very dark in coloring, and his nervous mouth was well cut; better, indeed, than his chin, about which there was something not clearly defined (for it was not an ugly chin), which led one to wonder why he did not wear a beard. He had a strong, direct, dark eye

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and a joyous voice. On the top of his head the black hair showed one gray lock.

His relation to Miss Sterling, which he carried in his atmosphere by a kind of proud and forced obtrusion of the fact, was clearly that of her father's physician, invited to luncheon and driven over to the Country Club,—the guest of an hour.

He looked about him alertly, recognizing a patient here and there with the professional eyes, and a few acquaintances with the personal ones. He had not the exasperating air common to his kind, of being so pressed for time that one is of no visible account unless one can proffer a sore throat or an exalted temperature; but wore, rather, the manner of an educated young man who had not too much to do, or who did not care whether he did it or not. This temperamental nonchalance seemed subtly to adapt Chanceford Dane for the leisure class, to which he did not by birth or training belong.

The surgeon stepped up and greeted him warmly, if this adverb could be used of any act of Dr. Frost's. In fact, there was, if you chose to think so, a forced cordiality in his welcome, which the village doctor buoyantly ignored.

"Ah, Frost!" he said airily. "This is well met. Did you sail over? How long shall you be around these reefs?"

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The two university men fell together for a moment, while the champion (with her sleeves rolled down) intercepted Miss Sterling, on whom her roving eyes rested with a fascinated attention, as if she had been a man.

"I made such a beastly stroke to-day," complained the golf girl. "It was such a rotten lie! If I hadn't made a beggarly swat at the fourth hole I'd have made the course in forty-eight. But I don't suppose *you 'd* care."

"Why, frankly, no—not so very much," said Cara Sterling in a half-troubled voice, as if she were sorry for the champion, or sorry, indeed, for any being in the world beautiful to whom her sympathy did not outflow that June day. "I am no sort of a player. Not that I don't try; but I can't seem to *care* enough. And as for Dr. Dane—" she included him in a smile which went to his head like wine.

"I don't know a brassie from a putting green," said Dr. Dane.

As the two turned the champion stepped back, and the physiologist and the young lady were brought face to face. Dr. Frost made a slight motion as if to extend his hand. Miss Sterling did not see it, and it dropped at his side. But she met him with her sweet geniality—she seldom denied this to any person; she had a charming manner,

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not untouched with dignity, but abounding with good humor and good-will.

"So you two were classmates," she said comfortably. At this moment the young lady was seized forcibly by the skirt of her muslin dress and unceremoniously and persistently shaken from behind. Two big brown paws clasped her neck, and then dropped to her waist and knee. The best Country Club gravel and too well-sprinkled lawn offered an excellent medium of impression, and the footprints of the dog etched the white organdie wherever they touched it. Before the girl could protest or rebuke, the collie kissed her delicately behind her pretty ear.

"Oh, *Clyde*!" cried Cara, laughing like a bell, "what a dear you are!" Stooping, she put her arms about the dog's neck, and laid her cheek upon his head.

"There never was anybody like Clyde," she said.

"I should hope not," observed Dr. Frost, indiscreetly. He returned to the waiter, as he spoke, the tall glass which he had offered Dr. Dane; it had been filled with Scotch and soda, and the village doctor had drained it like a man who did not see good liquor every day. "I should hope not," repeated Dr. Frost.

At the sound of these words the collie raised

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his noble head. His serious gaze challenged the bright company confidingly, one by one, until it reached the figure of the experimenter. Then a curious change passed over the dog. His upper lip wrinkled wickedly; a sinister expression crossed his face; it was swiftly smitten and replaced by one of inexplicable terror.

CHAPTER II

THE collie, who had advanced a step or two, retreated. He planted his four feet firmly on the piazza, and with set jaws regarded the physiologist, at whom he gazed with an abhorrence so intelligent as to be startling. This expression was, as we said, overtaken by one of bleak terror. The dog's ears fell, his tail dropped, his head drooped, his whole proud and fearless body cringed; he backed away, crouching, step by step, velvet-footed as a cat, until he reached the edge of the piazza steps. Here he paused, and seemed to consider his next move with seriousness.

"Why, Clyde!" said Miss Sterling, with some severity, "what in the world—I never saw him act that way! There is n't a cowardly hair on him. He fights every cur in Massachusetts. He never runs from any of them." Happily unconscious of a certain ambiguity in her last words (at which the surgeon flushed slightly), the young lady spoke sharply to the dog, who paid no more attention to her than if he did not have the pleasure of her acquaintance.

"Let him alone," suggested Douce Marriot,

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sweetly. "This is a *fin-de-siècle* drama. Let's see it played out."

A group gathered, and stopped talking. The dog and the physiologist occupied the foreground. It grew rather still. The clink of a glass in the club dining-room could be heard plainly. Tracie Benton said something, and Mrs. Marriot hushed her sharply.

The collie had by this time regained himself. Abject horror faded from his eyes, the cringe stiffened out of his body, his expression of terror gave way to one of composure and of dignity; this grew into a sense of personal injury, and passed slowly into a look of conscious wrong and of outrage so profound that it might have represented a race or arraigned one. The dog's eyes were deep enough, and the intellect behind them clear enough, to sustain more emotion than many human faces can.

After a few moments' reflection the creature stood erect again; his head rose high, and his ears higher. His tail reassumed the curve of self-respect, his whole fine body straightened and became rigid; his handsome face took on the mould of elemental rage. His upper lip curled, and wrinkled again, revealing a white fang. The scar on his forehead throbbed. He began to pant painfully. Then, clenching his teeth, he uttered a formidable growl.

"Come here, Clyde! Good fellow, sir!" ventured

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the physiologist, politely. He put out his veined, white hand. It could be seen that he deprecated the dog. "Come and speak to me, Clyde, old boy. Don't you know me? I've been at your house a good deal. Come here, sir!"

A roar from the dog replied. The man and the animal eyed each other. The man was a little pale. The dog seemed as conscious of this circumstance as any other observer. He hesitated, and crouched, still growling, and working himself by the sound of his own snarls into an indignation which was not without something of solemnity.

"Better be a little careful," said Clyde's mistress, uneasily. "This has gone about far enough." She started to interfere.

"Ss — ss — st — boy!" cried the golf champion at this moment.

Then the dog sprang. He cleared the distance between himself and the surgeon by a bound, and closed upon the man. Dr. Frost defended himself as well as he could, but every motion that he made clearly increased his danger. Clyde was a formidable fighter, and of great personal reputation among the collies, setters, and terriers of Balsam. He had this man at his mercy now; and he kept him there.

The golf girl shrieked like a mere woman who could not wield a brassie, and little cries came up

from the group on the piazza, which thickened quickly. Cara Sterling now had Clyde by the collar, but he shook her off as if she had been a stranger on the street. Dr. Dane, with an exclamation, came forward, and seized the dog.

"Look out!" cried Cara in a low tone. "He'll turn on you!"

The young lady and the surgeon were equally white by this time. Frost was thoroughly frightened, and almost the only conscious thought he had was his determination that this girl should not know it.

The collie, who had sprung first at the man's throat, for some reason abandoned his base of attack, and (not being a bulldog) did not feel it a point of honor to hold on where he had taken grip. He seemed rather intent on investigating the body of his victim more deliberately, and occupied by turning over in his mind the best methods of annihilation, meanwhile running his white teeth up and down the surgeon's shoulder and arm speculatively and, as yet, but lightly. At the slightest offer of human interference he tightened his teeth in the coat or the flesh, wherever they happened to be set at the moment.

"Oh, Clyde!" cried Cara in unbearable distress, "let go that gentleman! Let go! He is a friend of mine, I tell you, sir! Clyde, how *dare* you bite

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my friends! If you don't let go I shall — I shall *scold* you, sir!" Clyde's teeth slid down the surgeon's arm, and rested on his wrist and hand.

"Clyde, if you don't let go, I shall — have to — *whip* you, sir!"

For the first and only time in his life Clyde replied to his mistress with an ominous growl. His teeth closed on the man's wrist, just around the artery.

It was Dr. Frost's right hand, — the hand that had torn a hundred veins and nerves from living dogs bound and helpless, but conscious of their torments. It was the experimenter's expert right hand, whose merciless dexterity had created his professional success. It occurred to Dr. Dane what the loss of this hand, or even its partial disability, would mean to the vivisector.

"Surely I can strangle the creature off!" he cried. He caught the collie by the throat. But Miss Sterling pulled him back.

"He will tear him to pieces if you do that!" She had got to her knees now, by the side of her dog, and began to entreat him.

"Clyde! Come, Clyde. This is a mistake, Clyde. Let him alone. You've got the wrong man."

At these words a hoarse guttural went up from the dog. It sounded like a laugh.

"See, Clyde! You've made a blunder — Stop,

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dear, and listen to me. Clyde, you must listen to me!" She put her arms around the dog's neck, and laid her cheek against the scar upon his forehead. She could feel it throbbing violently beneath her touch.

"Look out!" cried Dr. Dane, anxiously. "The creature might hurt *you*. Can't any of you suggest anything?" he asked, whirling.

A gentleman standing by called a caddie. "Go to the green-keeper, and tell him to bring his pistol. Tell him to *run*!"

Cara Sterling's soft hand stole down over the collie's cheek and jaw.

"Do not — take any risks — for me," gasped Frost. "Please move away, Miss Sterling. There's no harm done yet. I don't think there will be. Really I don't, I —"

"Hush!" said Cara Sterling. "Please be still, everybody. I can manage my own dog — yet. Keep perfectly quiet, Dr. Frost."

Very slowly, very delicately and quietly, talking all the while in an undertone to the frenzied but, it could be seen, now attentive dog, the girl's white fingers slid past his jaws and gently urged themselves between his teeth.

A cry came from somewhere on the piazza; but Cara held up her other hand to enforce silence. Before the quickest perception could grasp her

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full intention, she had managed to insert her hand, finger by finger, between the animal's teeth, flat upon the physiologist's wrist. "There, Clyde!" she said softly. "You know you would n't hurt *me*."

The collie's jaws relaxed but did not open. He lifted his fine eyes, and regarded his mistress with a puzzled and wounded reproach.

"Dear Clyde!" said Cara. After a moment's hesitation he loosened his grip; the man's wrist fell free; the dog kissed the girl's hand—half piteously, it seemed—and laid his panting face upon her knee.

The piazza was now packed and the clubhouse full. Somebody cheered, and then such a hurrah arose that the girl felt her head swim. Frost went very white; he did not speak. Cara still knelt by the dog. Her head fell over on his forehead. The Balsam Groves doctor bent to ask her if she felt faint. But Mab Miller offered her whiskey gallantly.

"God have mercy on our souls!" cried Douce Marriot, suddenly. "Here is Sterling Hart!"

Every eye in the Country Club turned at the name. The dog and the physiologist became instantly a past sensation, and Cara was quite forgotten. Dr. Dane helped her to her feet, and she got to a piazza chair with her trembling fingers

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locked on Clyde's collar. Frost took himself away, and passed the portière of clematis and woodbine, which he brushed and bruised as he went through.

A man, head and shoulders above any other in the company, stood gazing perplexedly at the scene. He was of imposing physique, well proportioned, and cast in every respect on a larger mould than ordinary men. He wore no beard or mustache, and there was something Roman in his features and in the shape of his head. His eyes were dark and strikingly fearless, his mouth strenuous and grave, although it melted into a beautiful and sometimes a peculiarly happy smile. He had a commanding mien, and something of the peculiar self-possession of one accustomed to appear before masses of people. He was not a very young man, seeming something past forty, and his hair was slightly strewn with gray.

"Why, Cousin Carolyn!" he said, in an authoritative tone. "What does this mean?"

"Oh, Cousin Sterling!" cried the girl. "I can't have you scolding Clyde. He is n't in your diocese."

CHAPTER III

THE two in the dog-cart drove home more rapidly than they came. The dog with the shirt frill was not allowed to follow this time. Clyde sat at their feet, his head on the girl's knee, and her hand on his collar. Miss Sterling seemed very tired. Dr. Dane watched her with a professional eye, not always so alert to the occasion. He was not a particularly observant physician; he disliked his profession, and objected to himself for being in it, but tried to make the best of his blunder, as thousands of young men do in the acceptance of mistaken careers.

They had got away from the Country Club as quickly and as quietly as possible. Cara had said, "Come here, Cousin Sterling, and I'll confess all about it." And that eminent clergyman, in whose big arm she had linked her own while she whispered a few words in his bending ear, had protected her departure and the offending collie's. Sterling Hart's wide shoulders towered over Mrs. Marriot, the champion, Tracie Benton, and the rest, while the excited and exhausted girl slipped away. As he stood on the outer edge of the

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portière of vines watching her off, with lifted hat, the Reverend Sterling Hart had so grave an expression that his cousin would have noticed it if she had been less absorbed; for his warm smile was always hers without asking, and outside of his pulpit he was counted the best of good company. Socially he never preached or prayed.

The physiologist had not reappeared; he was reported by the gentleman who sent for pistols to be in the dressing-room bathing bruises, consoling scratches, pinning tatters, and generally occupied in the line of repairs. The Reverend Mr. Hart made an inquiry for him when he returned to the club piazza; and the popular version of the recent scene was promptly offered him.

“I have n’t seen anything better since I was in the Théâtre Français last January,” observed Mrs. Marriot, critically. “It was legitimate drama, Mr. Hart; suitable even for the clergy. Pity you missed it!”

Sterling Hart regarded Douce Marriot without reply. She felt that she hated him when he looked at her like that. His eyes passed from her to the talkative girl at her side; to the champion, swinging her feet from the rail; to the young ladies and gentlemen in the dining-room, with the tall tumblers in their hands. Most of these people knew him well, many of them were his parishioners in

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town, and had long since learned when to let him alone. It was quite plain now that he had one of his attacks when he would not talk. He turned away thoughtfully, and went to his locker for the broken lofter whose surgical needs he had come to attend.

.
The young people in the dog-cart were almost as silent as he. They had ridden as far as Solomon Hops's house before either spoke. When they came in sight of the chocolate éclair, the doctor looked the other way; he was afraid that some patients would waylay him (it being, in fact, his office hours), and he had no visible intention of blotting out this shining moment for any of the physical woes of his limited clientele. The young lady spoke now, not with any obvious interest in what she said:—

“How did you manage it? I should as soon have thought of asking them to take me to board at Westminster, or proposing to our late Minister to England to have me for a ‘mealer.’ Solomon would see the whole summer population starve before he would take in any of *us*.”

“Oh, rheumatism was my friend at court,” replied Dane, lightly. “He has developed a species that he holds at a high figure, like his marsh lots. He told me that he thought it might be handy to

have me around, in case he had spells. I believe the old Balsam doctor got tired of the case. I realize that I am in luck,—while it lasts. He may turn me into the street, you know, any day, if I don't cure him."

"Nannie is such a pretty girl, don't you think so?" asked Miss Sterling, abruptly enough.

"Who? Oh, she? Yes, quite pretty," replied Dr. Dane, without enthusiasm.

"She is studying art," pursued Miss Sterling, with a little smile. "A good many of them do, you know; I can't see why, can you? She comes up to see my portfolios. I felt as if I'd conquered a battalion the first day she did it. Most of the village girls hate us so. I can't help wondering why."

"It would be wonderful," bungled the young man, "if they hated *you*." The trite and fatuous words were not off his lips before he crimsoned with mortification at their escape. Miss Sterling had given him a swift, and, for so gentle a lady, somewhat imperious glance; but when she perceived his embarrassment she laughed outright.

"Oh, it will do!" she cried. "Anything will do, after what we have been through this afternoon."

Now, again, as once over there in the clubhouse, he felt his head grow light. But he answered steadily enough:—

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"I am glad you are able to speak of it. I thought I'd wait till you could. It was a tremendous scene. You went through it like —" He broke off.

"I can't understand why Clyde has taken such a dislike to Dr. Frost," she proceeded, speaking slowly and with some difficulty. "He never liked him — never. But the last few months I've had to keep the two apart whenever he has called. And he and his family are old friends of ours. Father thinks a great deal of him."

She said "Keep the two apart" precisely as if she referred to two gladiators, or other picked specimens of the human race distinguished for their belligerent qualities. It seldom occurred to Cara that her dog was classified among the inferior species. An eminent scientist at dinner one day had quite hurt her feelings by speaking of Clyde as a beautiful and sagacious animal.

"If it had been that golf girl," suggested Dr. Dane, with a brush of non-athletic scorn, "she could have stood it. Their sensibilities must be developed like their arms, I fancy, — all biceps and deltoid. But you —" he ventured again.

He was young, and his fancy set an aureola about this girl, — modest, finely finished, very woman of very woman, a beautiful anachronism, he thought, a fair, illuminated window which let in the light of another and a less rude day than

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ours. His profession, which (if we may be permitted the word) deidealizes women earlier in life and more roughly than any other, had not spoiled for the Balsam Groves doctor the glamour natural to his sex and his years, perhaps because he experienced so little interest in the profession. He thought of Carolyn Sterling in poetic phrases and in æsthetic phases; as violets breathe, as white roses bud, as blush clouds float, as fawns flee, as all shy and lovely things exist. He thought of her as a being to be sheltered all her life from the prick of a thorn or the approach of a draft; a girl not to be caused a tear nor to endure a pang; a girl never to hear bad news or a sharp word. He had been thinking of her in this way, and for some time; ever since her father's case fell into his hands in April. This unexpected drive was "a vision and a glory in the earth" to Chanceford Dane.

He had dwelt upon what he should say in taking her home, and how she would look, and act, and to what sacred economy he could best put that precious span of time. A rainbow like this, — which might never arch his life again, — by what fine color laws could its splendid hues be detached from the prism, hanging heaven high and held to light his heart?

Now the ride was almost over, and they had scarcely exchanged twenty words; these of the

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most indifferent and evasive sort. A dog and a physiologist (confusion be on Thomas Frost!) had smitten the rainbow out of the sky. The village doctor drove like a man under a blackening cloud, hurrying to get to her father's house; cutting short his own prismatic moment, and driving the faster because he perceived that Miss Sterling was more exhausted than she knew. She was such a healthy girl — more well than strong, as women free from every disorder but that of their own sensitiveness are — that it did not occur to Cara that she had experienced anything which would justify the sensations of collapse so new to her that they seemed nothing less than abnormal. Her words came with more and more difficulty; and she leaned back weakly against the tan leather cushions of the dog-cart.

Clyde, with his face on her knee, whined, stirred, and watched her as anxiously as the physician did. The dog perfectly understood that he was in disgrace; but, for his own private reasons, could not understand why. The ethics of the universe were overturned that day for Clyde. Justice was a blasphemy, and the human race a darkened riddle, of which his own adored and adorable mistress was the chief element of perplexity in a problem that was too much for collies.

“ I feel — very strangely,” said Cara, putting her

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hand to her head. Her white sunshade drooped, and fell. Dr. Dane caught it, slipped the reins into his right hand, and quietly laid his left arm across the back of the seat. He did not touch her, but, if she swayed, he could catch her at an instant's width.

"Lean towards me," he commanded, in his professional tone, "not the other way, not towards the edge. We are almost home."

"I never faint!" gasped Cara, defiantly.

"No," he returned, "you are not going to faint. I shall not let you. We are almost home," he repeated in a matter-of-fact tone, as if it had been an every-day affair for them to be driving together, or even as if — But he drove fast; and the dog-cart whirled up the long avenue, to her father's door, at a spinning pace. He tried to divert her thoughts from her sensations, as the merest apprentice in his profession seeks to divert a patient. "I wish I had one of those long drinks for you!" he began.

Cara, looking at him blindly, through the purple mist that had settled across her eyes, thought: "Why, he has a charming smile!"

But she did not think anything more. She had been sitting up very straight and stiff, when she gave way altogether, and suddenly, like a broken shaft, toppled toward him.

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Mr. Rollinstall Sterling was sitting in his large, cool drawing-room, — a plainly furnished room, with that sumptuous touch of indifference to other people's parlors which one sees only in the homes of the well-born rich. The absence of bric-à-brac and upholstery in this house was as marked and as severe as the figure of its master; a gray and stately gentleman, of a presence whose dignity was reduced a little by an invalid air. At the sound of the dog-cart, racing up the avenue faster than he thought necessary, he came out to the piazza, and sheltered himself in his wind chair. He had no sooner done this than he uttered a sharp though decorous exclamation, and got himself down the steps more quickly than the sick man had moved for many a day. He had never seen his daughter in a young man's arms, and his fancy flew to meet an unknown disaster, which took the form of a cross between an accident and an elopement.

"Get me some brandy!" called the village doctor, imperiously. Then, more gently: "She is not hurt, Mr. Sterling. I don't think she has even fainted — exactly. Let her alone, Clyde, — let her *alone*. Here, Tibbs, help me lift her out — No — *so*. She has been through a trying scene, that's all."

He put his arms powerfully about the girl, who,

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though quite conscious, found herself too weak to protest. In fact, it struck him that it was all one to her—whether the coachman or the doctor, it did not matter. Between them the two men carried her into the drawing-room and laid her on a broad sofa, by a window. The wind blew in salt from the sea, and dashed against her face. It was painfully white. The sparkling decanter shook in her father's hands, and the little Irish maid, Kathleen, began to cry. The young physician himself put the stimulant to her lips, though somewhat sparingly or cautiously. His fingers remained on her pulse. Once he put his ear to her heart. He made no comment, except to say, "You need not have a particle of anxiety, Mr. Sterling." Indeed, his chief concern seemed to be for his chronic patient.

"I never faint," repeated Cara, distinctly. "I can't—seem to see what ails me?" she complained. She tried to lift her head, which fell back heavily on the pink and white roses of the cretonne-covered sofa.

"Miss Sterling," said Dane, bringing his lips together, "you have had a shock. This is nothing but the reaction. You will be all right in a little while. You are not seriously ill. But you are worse because you are not used to being ill at all, and you don't know what it means."

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"Then I am ashamed of myself!" she tried to say. But the words came like wraiths of words, and an expression of distress and mortification passed over her blanched face.

"Everybody else is proud of you!" cried the doctor, fervently. "Trust me," he added, "if you can. I am telling you the truth in every respect."

She had always been so well, and so proud of her good health and superb young vigor, it seemed to her as if a moral blight had suddenly fallen upon her. She disliked Dane just then for being witness to this humiliation. And she made him no answer at all.

He got himself away from her as soon as he conscientiously could. He was not accustomed to young ladies who desired his professional visits shortened.

Mr. Rollinstall Sterling followed the doctor to the piazza, and laid a trembling hand upon his arm.

"Is it possible," he asked unsteadily, "that my daughter has inherited *my* difficulties? Is there — do you see — any signs of an affection of the heart?"

"The organ is as sound as mine," returned the young physician, with some unnecessary sharpness. "I tell you, sir, this is nothing but shock. Some men would call it a nervous sinking turn. I

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prefer the term shock. It covers the case. If she *had* a disease of the heart, Mr. Sterling, your daughter might have dropped, under what she has been through. It is an unusual physique — highly organized, sensitive to timidity, yet she has pluck enough and nerve enough to — I never saw anything like it, that's all!" concluded Chanceford Dane. With brilliant eyes he told the old man the story.

.
Before Dane had finished his late supper, which Nannie (it being her cook's day out) was somewhat slow in serving, his telephone called imperiously, and he was summoned back to Rollinstall Sterling's house; but the call came from the chronic patient. Mr. Sterling was suffering one of the habitual miseries known as his attacks; and his daughter, pale as a pear blossom, and slender, in a loose, misty gown, was in close attendance upon her father. The door into her own room was opened from his (she had not allowed herself, as the doctor knew, to sleep out of reach of the sick man's call for many months), and once or twice she passed in and out on some errand.

It was an arched door, and gave something of the effect of a vista to a dim perspective in which everything seemed to be white, with a possible

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blush as faint as the beginnings of dawn upon the walls. The girl stood on the threshold, austere and sweet; her dress looked vague, like the pearl-white fog that was sweeping in with the easterly from the open sea. The young man dared not raise his eyes to her. The physician busied himself assiduously with her father. He and Cara Sterling did not talk. Once he had said, "Where is Clyde?" and Cara had replied, "Shut up in the sewing-room. I *told* him," she added very sadly, "that I should have to punish him."

Dr. Dane did not ask the young lady how she felt this evening. It occurred to him that she was not without gratitude for the omission. She had never been his patient. It also occurred to him that she never meant to be.

When he came out through the dim drawing-room a powerful figure rose from one of the wicker chairs beside the cretonne sofa. It was the Reverend Sterling Hart, who had come to inquire for his cousin.

"After such a shock," he said, "I thought she must feel it. When I learned that you were in the house, I stayed to ask you."

There was a slight constraint in the clergyman's manner. Dane was somehow reminded that he was the village doctor. He replied with some dignity

in his own demeanor, under which the attitude of the other became more cordial.

"Can I do anything, do you think, if I remain?" asked Hart, with a boy-like timidity which was at times characteristic of the man.

"They are both quite comfortable now," replied Dane. "Miss Sterling meant to retire, I think. She ought not to have been up and about at all." He passed out without further words. His feet rang on the gravel, and he held his handsome head well up. In spite of himself his heart sang in an undertone. It was full moonlight, and the world seemed to be listening for something. At the end of the long, wooded avenue he met the surgeon, walking eagerly in the warm light.

"You, too, Thomas?" said Chanceford Dane, stopping short.

"*Et tu Brute?*" replied Frost, smiling steadily.

"You won't see her," added the physician over his shoulder. "She isn't fit for it—to-night."

He could not quite keep the note of privilege out of his voice. He hurried on, and out into the road; it ran like a river of light through the wide country. The fog had shifted, and was veering out. The sea called loudly, like something thwarted in a purpose. No carriages were at the moment passing, and the bright road was still.

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Some people on the hotel cliffs were singing, — such songs as everybody knew, — and the melody swung towards him, muffled by distance and foliage:—

“Oh, promise me that some day you and I
Will take our love together to some sky!”

The thick trees, black-green, and with leaves looking solid as metal, intervened like an embossed shield between himself and the house that he had left. As he stood gazing and dreaming, these changed their form to his stimulated fancy, and grew large and formidable, like the bastions of a garrison armed to guard something precious and of high degree.

He lifted his hat, and stood uncovered in the moonlight.

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Dr. Dane's telephone hung in his office, and his bedroom adjoined the office. He slept with his door open. At a little past midnight the call bell rang loudly. He sprang to the receiver. A woman's voice, — a lady's voice, — agitated, and rapid, but quite low, said:—

“Is this Dr. Dane?”

“Yes, Miss Sterling.”

“Can you come at once?”

“Immediately.”

“Papa is very sick— Oh, *very* sick! I have

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never seen him like this. I am afraid—" She choked, and he could hear her sob.

"I will be there in four minutes," he said. He flung on his clothes, pushed his bicycle out of Solomon Hops's dim entry, and whirled away.

CHAPTER IV

STERLING HART sat alone in the dim drawing-room for a few minutes after the doctor had left him, with the irresolution of a man who has been obstructed in the fulfillment of a cherished purpose that he is reluctant to abandon. Then he went out on the piazza, and with commendable caution ventured to try the hospitality of his uncle's wind chair, which groaned under his colossal weight.

"I'm too much for it," he thought, rising uncomfortably, — "as I seem to be for a good many things."

With the freedom of a near relative and of one intimate to the family life, he strolled about the grounds for a while, smoking the single cigar of the day which his clerical principles did not forbid him. His own summer house, but a mashie stroke away, stood in the moonlight with a solitary look; a large place — "too large for one fellow," as he was accustomed to say — close to the water's brow. Between the two estates the cliffs were cut by a deep ravine. It was high tide, and the water was sucking through, and dashed high with a hollow, reverberating sound. A narrow iron bridge, with

a strong, almost a solid, railing, spanned the chasm. The path across the rocks (three feet wide at the high-water mark) allowed by law and claimed by the clamorous people came to an abrupt end at the boiling fissure. At the right the beach, two miles long, stretched on to Balsam. The native population, elated by the decision which would weave the web of the trolley across this fair remnant of unsuspecting Nature, were building bonfires that night in celebration of the local victory; and their dark figures flitted to and fro across the blood-red light, looking small and uneasy, like flies liable to be caught in yet invisible meshes.

The "cottages" of the summer people — simply sumptuous or sumptuously simple within, and artfully artless without — commanded the water front for miles on either hand. Mrs. Douce Marriot was giving an elaborate dinner not a quarter of a mile away.

The music of the violin, 'cello, and flute brought out from town, sequestered in the garden for the entertainment of her guests, came over the ravine and undulated from the water with a softened and half-mysterious fervor.

Far down the beach the winter people were rudely singing around their bonfires the songs that the people loved. Sterling Hart paused on the cliff's edge to listen to them. Now and then

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he could make out the strain quite clearly. Once he caught the words:—

“Some day you and I—”

As he stood and listened, with shoulders well thrown back and his massive head erect, the flute in the Marriot garden, whether by accident or in self-defense, took up the popular melody. The 'cello responded, and the violin cried, wailing—or praying, as it seemed to him; the words came to him imperfectly, as if they said:—

“Oh, take this love, and lift it to the sky!”

Sterling Hart threw his cigar over into the water, where it fell hissing. He stood with bowed head, a reverent and majestic figure. His people were used to seeing him in this attitude at the close of Sunday afternoon services, in the twilight before the lights leaped out, when the organ received the benediction from his lips, and laid it solemnly upon their hearts and lives.

“One might not hear that again in a lifetime,” said abruptly a strident voice behind him. The preacher, wincing, turned.

“The two social extremes don't often hit off the same music.” Dr. Frost came up smiling, and looked over the cliff's edge.

“I'm not so sure of that,” replied Sterling Hart, quickly. “The great passions or the great aspira-

tions will do it. Perhaps the only thing is to strike the right key. Besides," he added, "the great sufferings do it, and the great sins."

"Hear them now," cried the physiologist, with a mocking smile. The pretty love song had ceased, and the crowds on the beach, now dancing around their bonfires, were shouting drunkenly:—

"We'll e-lec-tro-cute them doo-oo-des on a special trolley line."

"You've spoiled it, Frost," said the preacher, with a gesture of repugnance, as if the other were really to blame.

"Come over to the house with me," he said in a different tone; "I want to talk with you. My uncle's lights are out," he added, glancing at the sick man's windows. "He must be more comfortable. I've only been waiting to make sure. It's of no use pretending that they want us any longer."

His cousin's windows, too, were quite dark, and the green blinds closed. But neither of the two gentlemen spoke of this. They walked in silence towards the ravine, and crossed the little iron bridge, which vibrated with the preacher's weight.

It seemed rather lonely in Mr. Hart's large, silent house. His old housemaid came out to ask if he wanted anything.

"Only some cigars, thank you, Jane," he said. He offered these to his guest, but did not smoke

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again that night himself. He fell indeed into one of his profound and unapproachable silences, and sat looking at the water with eyes averted from Thomas Frost.

"Well?" said the surgeon at last, uncomfortably.

"It is the breach of hospitality," replied Sterling Hart, "that troubles me. I have some things to say that a host does n't usually say to a guest. I don't know that I'm going to be able to say them on my own piazza. Would you mind coming to walk — somewhere — after all?"

"We might row out to the three-mile limit, on neutral international territory," answered Frost, with a sardonic twitch of his mustache. "That would do, I suppose. Come, Mr. Hart, out with it, please! Don't stand on ceremony — in my case. I'm not sensitive."

"If you had been," returned the preacher, quickly, "I should not have been in the position I am — or you, either. We might have omitted the subject upon which I feel forced — I may be wrong, but I do feel so — to speak with you."

"To pursue the imagery of our friends yonder on the beach, don't electrocute me too slowly, Mr. Hart. It ought to be instantaneous — a thousand volts, and done with it. You keep me dangling in slow torture on 'a special trolley line.'"

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"There is some justice in that, I grant you," admitted Mr. Hart. "Here it is, then! Dr. Frost, I must request you to suspend your attentions to my cousin, — in short, to cease your suit."

Thomas Frost made no reply for so long that there was something distressing in his silence. His muscles stiffened, and from his face — never a mobile or expressive one — every flicker of expression fled; it was as if a thousand volts of doom had penetrated his soul and body.

"Do you speak as one having authority, or as the scribes?" he demanded at last, in a raucous, constrained voice.

"I venture to use the privilege of her nearest relative — her nearest man relative — with *mens sana in corpore sano*."

"You omit the lady's father from the calculation?"

"My uncle is an invalid; a remote and dying man; as much set apart from the world and as ignorant of a class of facts which have bearing on the case as a Franciscan monk."

"And yet," replied the physiologist, with a shrewd look, "I have presumed so far as to fancy that Mr. Rollinstall Sterling is not unfriendly to me."

"That is perfectly true. That is why I speak — to *you*."

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"Do you mean to imply, Mr. Hart," said Dr. Frost, very slowly, "that this friendliness is one which it is in your power, if you choose to exercise it, to overthrow?"

"I mean to imply precisely that."

"And that you might, under conceivable circumstances, choose to exercise the power?"

"Under conceivable circumstances—frankly—I might."

Dr. Frost got up and paced the piazza—not hotly, but with a cold, deliberate rage which froze where another man's might have melted. His movements were like those of a mechanical toy or steam effigy as he passed to and fro, with his cigar gleaming between his lips, and his whole figure as tense as metal. It was evident that his long habit of respect for the preacher—his elder and superior in all the values of life, both visible and invisible—prevented the surgeon from treating this extraordinary interference on the part of Sterling Hart as he would have treated it in any other man. Unfortunately he could not wind up the subject by a brief and natural "Blank you!" or, "Go to Blank!" or, "Do you want her yourself?" With a chilling self-restraint he sat down again in the piazza chair, and tossed the ashes from his cigar.

"Have you said anything?" he asked.

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"No. I am surprised that you put the question. No."

"She did not shake hands to-day over there," mused the experimenter. "I don't remember that this has happened before. It occurred to me — And yet, look what she did for me — afterward!"

A smothered exclamation from the preacher startled the summer air.

"Why, man! you don't mean to say you thought —"

"Consider the risk she ran," continued Frost, excitedly, "the courage it took — the —"

"Do you mean to suggest," blazed the clergyman, "that you suppose for one moment she did that for *you*? Why, it was for the dog, sir! They had sent for *pistols*! She was afraid they were going to shoot *Clyde*!"

"Damn that dog!" exploded the surgeon, fervently.

"That is a disposal of the subject which you did your best to effect about three months ago," replied Mr. Hart, gravely.

"Can't you let that alone?" came petulantly from Dr. Frost. "You are sure you have n't told her?" he added fatuously.

The preacher turned his stately head, and regarded the other with sternness.

"I shall tell her," he said quietly, "if you do not

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meet the request that I began this interview by making. Cease your suit, I say."

The physiologist had now become quite white. He opened his lips to answer, but no words came.

"I am sorry to make myself so disagreeable to any man," continued the clergyman, more gently, "but I have thought this thing well through. I can't allow her, without full knowledge of what she would be doing, to run so much as the thousandth fraction of a risk of being influenced by her father's feeling — or possibly by the glamour of having saved you from some shocking termination of that scene to-day — or by your own dogged and fatal persistency —"

"Yes," interrupted the surgeon, setting his teeth, "women are won by the indomitable. She would n't be the first. A man often succeeds by a kind of main force, if he understands that sort of thing."

"Dr. Frost," said Sterling Hart, in a tone under which the other tingled, "you oblige me to recall to you circumstances which have a different place in my memory from that which they hold in yours. Three months ago my cousin lost her dog. You know how she feels about Clyde. I need not dwell on that. He was missing a week. I should be sorry to stand by again and see her undergo what she did that week. There are people who will

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understand and respect her feeling, but I realize, of course, that this cannot be expected of you. I offered my services, — there was no one else to help her, — and everything that family affection, time, energy, ingenuity, and money could do to trace the dog was done; perhaps on a larger scale than is usual in such cases. I did the best I could. I'm rather fond of Clyde myself. He's been in the family a good while. You know where and how I found him."

He rose impetuously, and the two men stood facing each other in the white summer night.

"And *you* know," retorted the vivisector, "that I did not recognize the dog; they are so changed, by the conditions — the shaving, and — the general discomfort; and Clyde was so muddy and disreputable — he might have passed for the veriest pariah. Do you suppose I would have touched him if I had known he was *hers*? I'd sooner have experimented on one of the students!"

"When I found the dog," continued Sterling Hart, "he had recognized you. Before you made your first incision, he was trying to kiss your hand — I see it in my dreams, yet; I shall, I think, for a while; the worst of it was that poor Clyde thought he had found a friend."

The preacher's two hands, which had fallen before him, were clenched together; his large fingers

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showed in the moonlight purple from the knuckles to the tips.

"Do you suppose if she knew," he demanded, "*if she knew* —"

"A mistake! A misfortune! A wretched accident!" cried the vivisector. "Why need she ever know?"

"Why?" replied the preacher, in a low, vibrant tone. "To spare her from the same fate, — from the most distant possibility of it, I mean."

The physiologist sprang, and for the instant it seemed as if he would have struck his pastor — man to man. But he controlled and recovered himself.

"You take advantage of your cloth," he muttered. "What do you expect me to do?"

"I expected you to answer just as you have," replied Mr. Hart, quite undisturbed. "It is unavoidable, perhaps. So is the cause of offense which I have felt compelled to give you. You do not know my cousin," the clergyman hurried on with evidences of deep emotion. "It is not in your nature to understand her. She is not like other women — not like most of them. She is — she has a sensitiveness, a capacity for suffering that I — that you — There are so many ways of doing it! It is true that I am, as I am likely to remain, a lonely man. You need not remind me of that.

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But you may not understand what confidences men and women give their pastors. I know something what the risks of marriage are. A man may vivisection a woman nerve by nerve, anguish by anguish, as truly as if he put the scalpel to the tissue. And nobody knows it. She never cries out — ”

“ Nobody knows it except her clergyman,” shot back Frost, with a vitriolic glance.

“ Or her physician,” responded Mr. Hart, pleasantly. “ We strike the confessional out of the account.”

“ Go on,” came grimly from the physiologist.

“ I am going on,” firmly said the clergyman. “ I am going on to tell you, Thomas Frost, that he must be a tenderer man than you are who shall win a heart like *hers* and take her life into his keeping.”

Dr. Frost looked out to sea with dark, averted face; his lips twitched.

“ I take it for granted that you would rather give up — whatever chance you suppose yourself to have with her — than to have her know?” said Cara’s cousin, quietly.

“ Rather than to have her know — yes. I would give her up.”

“ I need no other justification of what I have done than that reply,” said the preacher, distinctly. “ Forgive me or not, as you choose. I can hardly

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expect that you ever will; but that is a secondary matter. My impressions are, however, that you will see that I had no escape from this; and that you, in my place, would have done the same."

"Perhaps I should," said Frost, with a forced, nervous smile. "Mr. Hart," he added, "you strike the villain out of the play in the first act. It doesn't seem to me good art."

"It's good conscience, at all events. And good art and good conscience are one, to my thinking," replied the preacher, more softly. "I could see no other way. I have thought it all through, as I told you."

He spoke sadly, and seemed suddenly very tired. The overwrought, overwearied modern look on his sturdy, antique features seemed curiously out of place. He had the physiognomy of a man for whom Nature meant life to be "a Roman holiday"; one who should have drawn his breath in joy, and raised his prayers to beauty, and worn the civic laurels of a happy state in ease of heart.

"And yet," pleaded the experimenter, with an obvious effort to turn the interview from the painful personal form which it had taken, "we are conscientious, too. We do not act from brutal motives. As a university man you must know us well enough to know that the development of Science—" He paused.

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"Yes," said Sterling Hart, "I used to feel just so. I know the point of view. There are others, that's all."

"You are not going against us!" exclaimed Frost, quickly. "*You?*"

"I have not mastered the question," replied the preacher, thoughtfully. "I am a pretty busy man. But I mean to, as soon as I can. It may be as important as the church calendar — who knows?"

"You trip at the personal equation," said Dr. Frost, bitterly.

"There are subjects which it takes the personal equation to manage. Nothing else can," answered Sterling Hart. "Good-night, Frost," he said gently, as he went up the steps.

"Be careful in case Clyde is about anywhere," he added, with genuine concern. "Sometimes he gets out these bright nights. I should be sorry to have you hurt. Better go home by the road."

The physiologist ground his teeth, but took the advice. He pulled his hat over his eyes, and got savagely away.

He paced the road aimlessly for a time, unable to collect himself. The vortex into which his calm, cold nature was plunged astonished him. He found himself in a condition which he did not know how to demonstrate and could not classify. In the course of an equable and healthy life he had experienced

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so little discomfort of mind or body that he was puzzled by it. Pain was a blatant stranger, forcing itself upon him without an apology. Instinctively he had turned in the opposite direction from the preacher's house, and this led him past the wooded avenue of the Sterling place. It was a large estate, of which the Reverend Mr. Hart's had originally been a portion, and it extended across the road among some soft meadow land and pretty woodlots of a mythical value. A small cottage, white, like the Sterling mansion, and half on fire with climbing nasturtiums, leaned back a little from the road; it had a homelike, cosy air, attractive to a quiet taste, beside the stately places among which it stood almost alone. This cottage, sometimes held open for the convenience of relatives or friends, sometimes rented to an irreproachable summer tenant, had by a freak of fate slipped that season into the surprising tenancy of Miss Mab Miller and her mother.

As the physiologist passed it, the champion came out and hailed him with the air of *bon camaraderie*, in which she was inevitable.

"Are n't you going?" she demanded. "Put about and come with me."

"Certainly I am going," replied Frost, "if you will be so good as to tell me where."

"Did n't Douce Marriot ask you?" asked Miss

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Miller. "I thought she always did. *I* was n't invited to dinner; I'm not often. But I'm expected as an evening feature. Are you an evening feature, too?"

"I'd forgotten all about it!" exclaimed Frost. "I don't know whether I'm altogether dressed for it. But I've half a mind —"

"I can lend you a four-in-hand and a shirt waist," suggested the champion. "Go in and ask Mother for them if you want to. No? Well, come along, then! Where's the odds?"

He fell into step with the champion's long stride. The golf girl was demurely dressed, like other girls; and her silk and chiffon which she wore, hung manfully over one arm to keep her trailing skirt from the dust, gave her an air as astonishing as a spectacular metamorphosis in a play. She did not talk golf, and was sparing of her slang.

The surgeon found her altogether possible, and with no undue struggles to escape, accompanied her to Mrs. Marriot's. The golf girl accepted his escort without a perceptible flutter. It did not seem to matter to her whether he went or not. She would have been rather a pretty girl if she had not been so red.

Douce Marriot received Dr. Frost cordially. She had not seen him at her house for some time; but she did not commit the mistake of reminding

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him of the fact. He used to be one of what she called "her young friends." But that was when he was a very young man. She treated him with the discretion of a woman who knows that a man has outgrown her, but with the art of one who perceives that he has never really attained to a plane so much above her own that she need feel any harrowing concern about his spiritual evolution. The hidden musicians in the garden were playing a Strauss waltz.

"Be a jolly good fellow," said Douce Marriot, with that touch of the maternal which no one knew better than she when to assume, "and have a rousing time. I should say you needed it. What? Well, if you are going to assume that St. Anthony expression (it is n't natural to your type) you'd better go home."

"I can't," said Frost, with a rigid smile. "I've got to wait for Miss Miller."

CHAPTER V

WHEN Dane leaped from his bicycle at the end of the long avenue he found the household aroused and stirring anxiously. Kathleen conducted him through the dark drawing-room. The patient's room seemed almost painfully bright as he came into it. The bed was pushed out into the draft, and Miss Sterling sat on the edge of the mattress, in a fixed and uncomfortable position, holding her father to the air. When he saw how sick a man he had to deal with, the heart of the young doctor sank. He thought: "Here's the devil's luck. The first patient I lose in Balsam, — and her father!" But he said nothing, and went manfully to work. Mr. Sterling was unconscious when the doctor reached him.

"Telephone to his town physician," commanded Dane, in a sharp voice, when he had stimulated for fifteen minutes. "Tell Dr. Strang to come out on the milk train, or take a special if he can get one. Tell him I think it best."

Cara obeyed without a word. The long-distance telephone desk stood in the library. She returned in a short time, and said, "He will come." She

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put her shaking hand on Dane's arm, and lifted her lips to his ear. They formed the words:—

"Is my father dying?" It was the first question she had asked. Dane shook his head positively.

"Every beat of the heart is stronger. I have nothing but hope—nothing! But you will feel better—however it turns out—to have Dr. Strang here. I am a young and inexperienced man."

"I trust you the more for your saying that," said Cara, clearly.

"Then I thank you," answered Dane, without looking at her. He was now absorbed in curt, professional orders, which he shot at her. Hand him that nitro-glycerine. No, not the nitrate of amyll—the other. Send Kathleen for more hot bags. Send Tibbs— No, she'd better telephone herself. "Call up the hospital. Tell them to send the trained nurse who brought the Methodist minister out of heart failure in that pneumonia case. I forget her name, — Gray or Green, — it was something colored. Have her here in half an hour."

When Cara returned from the telephone the second time the light leaped into her wan eyes.

"He is better!" she breathed. "I see a great difference."

"Do you?" said Dane, cautiously. "I see some myself." He worked on with the scrupulous conscientiousness, the ardent patience, and the undis-

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ciplined and wilful hope which sometimes give to a very young practitioner the advantage over a wiser and sadder man. His patient responded to his treatment with a slow but steady improvement, which made the young physician's heart bound in his body. It would have been difficult for almost any other unknown and struggling doctor of his rank and training to understand how small a proportion of this emotion in Chanceford Dane could be called professional fervor. In point of fact, he was as nearly destitute of professional ambition as a man could well be and hold the diploma of a great school. Yet he did that night a superb piece of work, with a brilliant force that a distinguished colleague might have envied.

He who was accustomed to say to his own soul that he had not a scientific cell in his brain seemed to himself like a scientific seer suddenly lifted among the stars, and in the ether of a sublimated career. He breathed a rarefied atmosphere, beside which professional ambition was a paltry and vulgar thing.

He was aware of every motion that she made, of every breath that she drew. Her candid eyes dwelt on him with a growing wonder, respect, and gentleness. He could feel her trust like a chrism on his unworthy head. Her touching gratitude rose about him wave by wave, like the tide of a sacred

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sea. He was overwhelmed by a sense of her nearness, her rarity, her dearness. All that night they stood together, shoulder to shoulder, hand to hand, like science and tenderness — oh, dare to dream, like son and daughter! — fighting for the old man's life. He thought how he had been troubled because his afternoon with her had been spoiled and cut short. A hundred drives could not have overcome a span of the distance between them as this half-night's solemn privilege had done. A dozen seasons in a drawing-room might have held him off at her heart's length. He might have come in and out, a chosen family friend, for years before her, and yet have stood farther from her, as souls measure space, than he stood as the moonlight and the dawn struggled together upon the sea that night. At half-past one he said to her: —

“The danger is passing.”

At two: —

“He will live.”

At half-past two, the nurse (who had been delayed by some mistake) arrived.

“Has Dr. Strang been here?” she asked at once.

“The case is in Dr. Dane's hands,” answered Cara, with a certain pride which she made no effort to conceal. The nurse — she proved to be a Miss Black — looked more surprised than she

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knew she ought to look, but received the young physician's orders with more respect than she had expected to feel. She got to her post with despatch and an admirable skill ; and the sick man, breathing feebly but evenly, slept.

The daughter and the doctor looked at each other with a glad gravity. Each drew a long, full breath. Cara felt her head whirl a little, and turned instinctively towards the low window which opened on the piazza towards the sea.

"Miss Sterling," whispered the nurse, "you will take cold."

Then Cara, looking down, flushed faintly from her forehead to her chin. She had forgotten how thinly clad she was, in the hastily caught clothes she had thrown on when her father's bell summoned her two hours and a half ago. She glanced at her bare feet in their rose-pink leather slippers. Her tumbled hair hung in two braids down her back, like a little girl's. Her long, white woolen gown took heavy folds such as marble takes, and draped her like a statue.

"I'll give it up, then," she said, shrinking.

"Go back and wrap yourself up, and come," commanded the doctor. "It is just what you need. Air first, — then food, — then sleep."

Cara obeyed him gratefully. She hurried into some stockings and wool-lined shoes, and, folded

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in a long, hooded, gray cloak, whose fluttering white fur fringe fell from throat to foot, she stole out. Dane put her into a steamer chair, and covered her with a blanket, which he seemed to have brought out for the purpose.

"Get the doctor something to eat, Kathleen," she said, "and go straight to bed. I shall do the same in ten minutes. And you?" she asked, turning her sweet, haggard face to the young physician.

"I shall not go farther from him than this, until Strang comes. I must see Dr. Strang."

Kathleen brought milk and sandwiches, and went away. Miss Black did not move. The sick man slept.

"So few people think to offer a doctor any nourishment,—even in long, hard cases," said Dane, gratefully. "You would n't believe how rare it is."

Within the house and without it was so still that it seemed an offense to speak. Dane found himself whispering as one whispers in the presence of some great and solemn function, if one speak at all. He had a commendable idea of bringing the girl's mind and heart down out of the strain where they had clung all night. But his words seemed so trivial to him that he was ashamed of them as soon as they were out.

It was almost three o'clock. The scent of com-

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ing dawn was on the leaves and blades of grass. A stir of expectancy thrilled and filled the summer world. It was as if the sky spoke, and the earth listened, and the ocean witnessed a vast miracle as imposing and as absorbing as it was when the evening and the morning were the first day. It seemed to him as if he had never seen the sun rise before. In point of fact, it was a common experience with him. But Cara so seldom saw the day break that she looked on it with the eyes of Eve and the sensibilities of Eden.

“You have saved my father’s life!” she breathed. Her eyes brimmed slowly. The prelude to the dawn was on her face as she turned it, looking at him half timidly. Her profile was cut delicately on the rose lining of her hood. The white fur on her throat and breast stirred with her breath. Her gray cloak wrapped her as if it had been chain armor of fine, woven steel.

Though he had thrown himself at her feet and worshiped her, he felt that he could no more have touched her than he could a lady of glamour and romance, with armies at her call, and nations fighting for her smile. It seemed to him as if poets might have sung of her until they died, and dreamers dreamed of her until they awoke, and any man and all men contended for her, and never won her, and loved her none the less for

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that, but held her in their hearts forever, unclasped, unknissed, inviolate, very woman of very woman, as he had called her in his own devout thoughts — the eidolon of all that is human and high, tender, and remote; a woman to make a man all that he might be, and not to scorn him for what he was. Yes, and to make and to leave him a better man forever, though he never won her, but stood afar off, and dared not lift up so much as his eyes unto the heaven of her love.

In such measures and in such images the young man dreamed. For he was a man, and young. And she was the sweetest woman he had ever known. So they sat together, side by side, spent with vigil, set apart by a shared and solemn experience. Then, while they watched the sea, not speaking to each other, the sunburst flashed into her face. She got to her feet like a Mussulman at prayer, and stood with her hands outstretched.

"I was thinking," she whispered, "that he might never have seen any more sunshine. . . . Dear Papa!"

He looked at her without answering. He saw her lip tremble. She put out her hand. He took it, and bowed his head above it.

"I don't know what to say to you," pleaded Cara, as if she were a child at fault. "But I feel —"

"Don't try!" he said.

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She left her hand lying trustfully, and it appeared quite contentedly, in his. His lips touched, but did not press it. She removed it slowly.

"I must go in," she hesitated.

"Go right to sleep," he answered, in a resolute tone. "Sleep until we call you. You don't realize how much you need it."

"And you?" She turned, in the long, low window, looking back.

"Oh, I'm used to it," urged Dane, smiling. "But you have n't any diploma."

The birds were now singing madly. Every tree thrilled. The dipping sails, elusive and mysterious, were cut in cloth of gold or in pale crimson tapestry. The June flowers in the garden, drenched in dew, offered a wonderful perfume. The scent of seaweed came up, for it was half tide.

The whistle of the milk train shrilled along the valley, between the woodlands and the village. As the two stood listening, it panted into the station, and stopped.

"There's Dr. Strang," said Dane. "I'll meet him at the avenue. I hope Tibbs was on time with the carriage." He stepped in through the piazza window after her, scrutinizing his patient, and slipped away. The nurse sat immovable beside the bed. She nodded brightly at Miss Sterling. Cara looked at her father longingly, but did

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not venture to approach him. He slept peacefully, and his breathing was quite regular. She slid into her white room, and shut the door.

When she awoke it was late morning, for she had heavily overslept, and no one had aroused her. She wondered how she could have done it, throwing off everything on the doctor, like a child. She hurried out remorsefully; her father, with the quick recuperation of his malady, was sitting up against his pillows, happily watching for her door to open. The nurse sat smiling. Dr. Dane was gone. Dr. Strang had returned to town.

"And he says he could n't have done better himself. He says you don't need to send for him another time." Miss Black hastened to proffer this intelligence with a certain half-amused but wholly deferent sense of its acceptability.

When Cara, in her fresh dimity, with her shining eyes, went out to her breakfast, she saw through the open front door a titanic figure sitting humbly on the piazza steps. Sterling Hart rose and stood bareheaded.

"Cousin Carolyn," he said reproachfully, "why did n't you send Tibbs for me last night?"

"Why, Papa was so very sick — and I had n't time to think — and I thought — and the doctor came — and there seemed to be nothing you could do." She stumbled over her words. The truth was

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that it had not occurred to her. She had not thought of her cousin, on whose massive devotion to the family she had leaned ever since her mother died; she had not once thought of him all night long. Leaning becomes a matter of course; and the solid surface behind us, whether granite wall or porphyry pillar, whether iron bar or gate of pearl, melts into the consciousness like the atmosphere, and may be treated accordingly.

Dane, on the contrary, got no sleep at all. His eyes were brilliant and feverish, his brain ablaze. He needed neither food nor sleep.

For he on honey dew had fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

After the consultation he went to the station with Dr. Strang, and then took a short cut across the fields directly to his boarding-house. All he wanted was to be alone, and stay alone until he could clarify his thoughts. Up to this moment it could be scarcely said that he thought at all. His feeling mastered him like a storm of wind.

His professional success in last night's emergency — the evident impression it had made on his eminent city colleague — absorbed the smallest possible measure of his attention.

A girl in a long, gray, hooded cloak seemed to float in the morning air before him. She kept a

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little way ahead all the time, like those allegorical figures that one sees in old pictures which set forth the battle of life or the pursuit of fortune. The white fur fringe on her throat and breast stirred with her gentle breath. Her eyes, gray blue and candid, lifted themselves to him timidly. Her hand, a marvel of perfume and velvet, lay in his.

For him, he held his young head like one of the gods; his eyes, seeing nothing, looked straight before him; and his lithe figure swung across the meadow with a vibrant, beautiful buoyancy. He trod on the morning clouds.

Seeing nothing, and coming up against the stone wall bounding a little side road which led to a wharf, a stable, and a boathouse, he had all but stumbled over the prostrate figure of a man. Uttering no exclamation, for he was poised in some star where a man did not find it natural to swear, Dane stopped and turned the figure over, so that the day fell fully on its face.

It was Timothy George, the caterer. His men were feeding the horses in the stable. A boy was washing the team, from which the signs of Mrs. Marriot's entertainment were not yet entirely removed. George himself was quite drunk. Nobody seemed to think it necessary to pay any attention to him, and Dane, on reflection, concluded that he was not called upon to trouble himself about

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the fellow. But he did say, "Poor Nannie!" impulsively, aloud.

"Hey?" muttered George, rousing stupidly at the word. "What the blank — Doncher tell Nan," he muttered, and relapsed into a comfortable stupor.

Dane walked away, touched with merciless disgust. It seemed to him almost a profanation of his own sublimated experience that he should have happened upon so vulgar and debased a scene. He hurried as fast as possible from the caterer, got himself into his office without seeing any one, and locked the door upon his ecstasy.

CHAPTER VI

JUNE blossomed into July, and July blazed into August. It was a severe summer, but Balsam Groves knew little or nothing about that. To a shielded class, fortunate with most of the other privileges of life, was given the elect of luxuries, that of being able to keep cool in hot weather. Even the reflected discomfort of those who could n't was spared one. The cooks were downstairs. And nobody else on the East Shore looked too warm.

Life touched these pleasant people lightly; on its surface, at all events. With the exception of one or two stragglers, — it was remembered that Tracie Benton had unexpectedly sailed for England, and that Dr. Frost had engagements in Bar Harbor, — the usual groups were quite unbroken, and their familiar faces appeared at the usual round of things. The Country Club fell headlong into a gulf of golf and polo. Society in the artfully artless water-front houses plunged into a series of entertainments but recently favored in Balsam Groves, whose earlier summers had been more simply passed. The late dinners, the later dances, the elaborate ceremonies and toilettes of town, replaced the

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inadequate aspirations of years when guests, and not too many of them, were expected to take their hall candles by ten o'clock, when ladies found it the correct thing to affect plain wash gowns and broad shade hats, to cultivate the acquaintance of one's children, to spend the evenings with one's husband, — in extreme cases, even alone with him, — and to contemplate life without a kitchen maid, or a footman.

Douce Marriot did not call her villa a cottage, and her personal amusements were cast on the scale of an establishment luxurious even in Balsam Groves. These diversions were as elaborate as her decorations, and as lavish as her check book; while she guided them within the geometry of the respectable, her standards of decorum were her own. She had no summer, but a "season." Men who knew her were divided into three kinds, — those who shunned, those who followed, and those who cursed. Women did not love, yet they did not remove her; she was far from *déclassée*.

"Do you know her?" asked Dane one day, when he had driven over from a professional visit on a picturesque neuralgia of Mrs. Marriot's to see the chronic patient whose case had added to the young physician's practice in Balsam Groves. "She seems a kind-hearted, light-headed woman."

Cara was struck with Dane's definition, and its

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tone. Both belonged to a man more accustomed to a complicated social life than she had allowed herself to suppose that Dane's had been.

"Oh, I know her as we all do," said Cara, hesitating. "Mamma did not like to have me go there. And Papa does not like to have her come here."

In truth, Miss Sterling belonged to a class of people who did not discuss Mrs. Marriot.

"I am not to the manner born with this Northern society," said Dane, frankly. "It puzzles me sometimes. I was brought up anyhow," he added almost roughly, "not like you."

He leaned towards her, with the unmistakable look. Hers dropped before it.

"I am going to tell you about it—about myself," he persisted. "I am going to tell you everything before long."

Cara did not answer, and his peremptory tone melted to entreaty.

"May I?" he asked, humbly.

"I have sometimes wished you would," said Cara, lifting her clear eyes.

"You may not find the sketch available," protested Dane, with a forced smile. "That is what the editors say when they return your manuscript."

"Do you write?" asked Cara, with unconcealed astonishment. Her friends did not; except her

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cousin Sterling, when he published sermons and addresses. The idea was not without the interest of novelty to her. If she had been a daughter of the literary or professional ranks, she would have thought: "Oh, here's another!"

"Sometimes," answered Dane, lightly. "When anybody will print, that is; it's a sort of rest to me. I hate medicine. I always did."

"Why?" demanded Cara, gravely.

"I don't know." Dane shook his head. "I was made that way."

"And yet," urged Cara, "you are so successful. My father thinks — Papa says you have a brilliant future."

"Does he?" asked Dane, rising restlessly. "I happen to have helped him. That's quite a different thing. But I think I *could* go on. I could peg away at it; I *could* amount to something. But I should have to choose my conditions. And it wouldn't be because I loved what I was doing. It would be for another reason."

His eyes met the gentle perplexity in hers frankly. He had known for weeks that his time for disguise was whirling by. There was but a mask of golden tissue now interposed between his feeling and his fate.

That night he wrote a letter; the first that he had ever sent her. It ran, —

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MY DEAR MISS STERLING, —

Thirty-eight years ago a South Carolina girl ran away and married an Illinois ranchman. She was of spotless character, gentle breeding, and gentle birth; she was young, beautiful, and courageous. She carried herself through her mismated marriage like a queen; never complained of her lot, at its worst—and the worst was bad enough—and died the sooner for her silence and disdain. She was the mother of two children. I am the elder of those boys, and I am thirty-six.

When my brother (his name was Clay) — when my brother and I were little fellows we found her one morning lying dead upon her bed. I went in first, and tried to make her speak to me. Our father was away; he usually was. He came home and buried her, and left us with the cook, — this was in Ohio, — and when he came back again he brought us a stepmother. I think she was a Mexican, but I did not undergo the pleasure of her society long enough to find out. My little brother and I ran away, — it was in the blood, you see, — and tumbled about the state for a while, starving on our own responsibility. He sold newspapers, and I blacked boots. One day I was scrubbing a man's shoes (I never took to the profession; not much more than I do to medicine), and I hurt him — he had the gout — and he boxed my ear.

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There was something so familiar about this personal attention that I looked up in his face; and it was my father's face.

"Why, Chance, you little devil!" he said. "And there's Clay, upon my soul! Poor — little — Clay! Why, you poor little devils! Come along and have some breakfast."

He tucked us under his arms, one on each side, and took us away with him. We never resumed the active and honorable vocation from which we had been snatched. My father was never a brute, you know — to us. What he was to my mother is her affair, and his. I don't like to think of it. Sometimes I think he tried to make it up, — whatever it was, — especially to little Clay. Clay was packed off to some of Mother's relatives in Charleston, and *he* had a decent time. They were gentle people, but poor enough — like most of their class, war ruined. But they gave the little fellow a home, and a bed to say his prayers by, and I've always been glad of it. They educated him, too, somehow. Heaven knows how, unless Father was behind them. I think he must have been.

It fell to me to rough it. Father's Mexican had left him, and as he grew older he sobered down, and had attacks of family feeling, and a form of gout which he called depression. At all events, he

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kept me with him. I need not try your gentle patience to tell you how we lived, or what we did; for we lived all ways, and did most things. You wouldn't understand, if I did tell you. You couldn't. Ranching, railroading, exploring, mining—they were all honest enough, in their way. Father kept where the law couldn't reach him, always—drank some. But he got over that in middle life, which is an uncommon thing. Then, as I say, when he began to grow old he softened. Most men do—unless they sour; and rough men mellow sooner, I've thought, and you notice it more. Father kept a certain good nature, and bonhomie. I used to think that was what deluded my mother; he was a debonair young fellow, I've been told, and as handsome as a fallen angel.

Miss Sterling, I am writing on and on because I have not the courage to stop. Be patient with me. The end will come soon enough.

I was never "reconciled," as the relatives say when patients die—I lived in a kind of rage, and the older I grew, the more I raged, and the less I said. So it went on, until I came to be nineteen. One night we were mining in Colorado; he found me looking down into the shaft, and he asked me what I was up to. I said I was wondering how it would feel to jump down. I couldn't write his answer out to you. In his way, he was an artist

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in language. But I looked him in the eye, and I said: —

“My mother was a lady. I don’t want to be the kind of fellow you are. I’d rather go down the shaft.”

“I don’t know but I’d rather you would,” he said. And he turned away, and went to the hotel, and shut himself up in his room. And that night he called me to him at midnight, and said: —

“Chance, I’ve made my pile this year. I don’t know how long it will hold out. But so long as it does, I’ll go shares with you. I’ll educate you, — if you’re worth it. If you’re not, I’ll throw you over.” Two hours after that, at the dead of night, he called me back into his cold room and began again: “When you were born, your mother said: ‘This baby shall be a doctor, like his Uncle Clay.’ You run off and please your mother, and I’ll back you up and see you through.” As you see, it came just nineteen years too late. I’ve been ever since trying to overtake those nineteen years. My education has been a checker-board of West and East, of good and bad, of wise and foolish, of rough and smooth. He sent me to the Chicago preparatory schools; he put me through Princeton College; and in my junior year he died. I’d begun to be fond of him by that time, and I felt sorry, and I missed him. I have shifted for myself ever since,

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and when it came to that, I was glad I knew how; and thanked my father, on the whole, for all that training in "the University of the world." It was tough at the time. But it tells now. I've chopped wood, and 'tended furnaces, and waited at summer hotels. I have taught school, and tutored students, and reviewed books, and written leaders, and been a writing master, and given — God forgive me — lessons on the violin. By dint of some ingenuity, and a fund of excellent health, I have put myself through the medical school of our powerful and arrogant university; and have got in a few years of hospital and some other work before I quartered myself upon the helpless inhabitants of this afflicted village. They can't object to it more than I do. If my mother had n't said that pathetic thing about my Uncle Clay, I should n't be doing it. But I am.

Miss Sterling, I am as poor as your coachman. And I am likely to continue in that state into which it has pleased Providence to call me, for God knows how long. But there is no stain upon my character, nor upon my life. If there were, you know as well as I do—or I dare believe you know—that I should not be writing this letter to you.

Miss Sterling, I am not of your class. I am not of your condition. I am not of anything that you have been trained to understand or to feel an in-

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terest in. I do not know whether I am even a gentleman, by the standards to which you have been taught to defer. I only know that I have that to say to you to which I should prefer that you listened—if you were so gracious to me as to listen at all—after, not before, I have acquainted you with these facts. So here they are. And I dare write myself, in spite of them,

Your faithful and devoted friend,

CHANCEFORD DANE.

Dane sent this letter off desperately, without giving himself time to repent of or recall it; and tried to cajole himself all day, because he had done it; and cursed himself all night, and wished he had n't.

The next day he went about his business wretchedly, and played truant with his office hours, and was cross to his patients, for he had not the best of tempers. He had a quarrel with Solomon Hops (which Nannie made up for them) on the untimely topic of personally conducted rheumatism, and so got himself out of the chocolate éclair house fretfully, and drove about the village all the morning, dividing the time between real and imaginary patients, and running in to his office now and then to see if any reply to his letter had been sent. None had. He knew better than to expect any.

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Yet he kept on darting in to see, and driving off again. On the last of these erratic appearances, Nannie asked him, if he met Timothy George, would he be so kind as to say — something; he forgot what as soon as he had gone. But with the mission on his conscience, towards noon he drove down the road that ran by the wharf, the boat-house, and the caterer's stable. It was a rude road, hardly more than a cart path, and a sheltered spot. George was not there, and his men were at their dinner. While Dane sat in his buggy watching the water, as people on the shore always do when other occupations fail, he heard a cry of distress. It was several times repeated before he noticed, not more than forty-five feet off the beach, an overturned boat, a keel boat, rather a slight affair, such as is built for ladies' and children's use. At the same moment he perceived a human head steadily moving towards the shore. It was accompanied by another living object, whose nature or relation to the first he could not make out. He ran to the boathouse. It was empty. He called for help, as one does in such a case, — madly and aimlessly, — though he knew perfectly well that every man belonging within earshot was at dinner. There was nothing else to do but to take off his coat and boots and jump in, which he did, without hesitation. But the process had taken

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the imperceptible moments which count so much in emergencies, and before he could overtake the swimmers they had almost reached the beach which lay between the wharf and the cliffs. It was a little beach, a mouthful bitten out of the rocks, but the surf was dashing vigorously on it. For several days the wind had pounded from the east, and, in fact, it was not "ladies' weather."

Dane was a sturdy swimmer, and although he now perceived that he would prove to be rather a comic supernumerary than a serviceable and enviable hero, he pushed on obstinately. He had approached one of the figures—it seemed to be a crimson figure—when a half-drowned growl warned him away.

"Oh, *please* don't!"

A woman's voice bubbled up and strangled off. Dane uttered a terrible exclamation. A big spurt of strength and speed lessened, but did not annihilate, the distance between himself and the object of his chase. His eyes ached in his head from the intensity with which they fixed upon that flicker of crimson ahead of him. The choicest forgotten profanities of his youth leaped to his mind when he saw that the collie had the best of it, and meant to keep what he had. It was a duel in devotion between the dog and the man, and dog—as he had the right to—won. He pulled on,

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volleying canine oaths, giving language for language. Clyde was determined to keep his rival off; and he carried out his determination with the success which he knew was expected of him.

As soon as she felt the sandy bottom beneath her feet, the girl began to laugh. Dane saw two crimson arms and little purple hands come up to dash the water out of her eyes, as she waded heavily to the shore. He was still over his own depth, and swimming preposterously.

"Let go, Clyde!" she commanded. "Let go, dear!" Clyde's mighty grip loosened, and slipped from her shoulder to her knees, tenderly feeling its way until he found the hem of her boating dress. There he closed his teeth, and with one eye on the infuriated swimmer he held on calmly. Cara got herself squarely on the beach and stood up straight. Dane had by this time struck his feet on the sand, and was wading grimly in. He felt how he must look. The position was too much for him, and he muttered something which was not quite clear to the young lady, but it seemed perfectly intelligible to the collie. With a roar, Clyde released his mistress and dashed into the water. Planting his four feet in the sliding sand, rigid as an iron dog on a pedestal of steel, up to his shoulders in the surf, he stood between the

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woman and the man. As Dane waded in, the dog lowered his head, and his upper lip began to wrinkle.

"Oh, why don't you come ashore?" cried Cara, sweetly. She did not mean to be as cruel as she sounded, and she tried so hard not to laugh that Dane's sense of humor deserted him, and he exclaimed fervently:—

"Let me just get hold of that dog!"

"He'll just get hold of you if you don't look out," said the girl, without laughing. "Clyde! Clyde! Oh *Clyde!* come right out of the water this minute, sir! I don't know what ails him. I can't do a thing with him. Clyde! He—he does n't seem to mean to—he does n't seem to want you to come ashore—*at all.*"

"Meanwhile," said Dane, fiercely, "you are standing there in this east wind chilled to the heart. I'm coming, anyhow," he observed more quietly. "It's between me and the dog, Miss Sterling. Take the consequences; and take your choice!" He waded in, smiling but formidable. At that moment he was capable of throttling Clyde; and Cara felt it. She stepped back into the water, and put her hand on the dog's collar, and whispered something in his ear. He followed her out through the surf like a cosset on a clover field. When she turned, Dane stood beside her.

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"What was it you whispered to Clyde?" he demanded.

"Oh, don't you see?" she cried, with a pretty, penitent gesture. "You are taking the credit of the rescue away from Clyde. You could n't expect him to stand that, now, could you? He brought me all the way in, just as you saw. He picked me up as if I'd been a chip. He did n't seem to have the least confidence in my swimming. He just held on. I should have been — I might have — Clyde," quavered Cara, "you're a splendid, precious, noble fellow, and I love you with all my heart!" She took the collie's head in her hands, and put her trembling lips to his wet, scarred forehead.

"Oh, see here!" said Dane.

Cara, in her crimson boating dress, stood up, pale and dripping. He could see how she struggled for her self-possession.

"I struck a reef," she said, "and we went over. That's all. I am very much ashamed of it. I never capsized before. And I tried to swim; but my dress was heavy (it's ladies' cloth), and there was something in the water that held me back."

"There's a tremendous undertow to-day," said Dane, shuddering. "Come!" he added, for he choked. "I can't have you standing here." He drew the girl along, lifted her over the rocks,

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picked her up and put her into his buggy without a word. He did not consult her wishes or explain his purpose; he drove off wildly towards the chocolate éclair house. Clyde followed, drenched and ecstatic, in the dust. Cara spoke but once, then she said:—

“Do you really think it was the undertow?”

Dane made no reply. They met no one on the way; he drove rapidly, and pulled his horse to the haunches at Solomon's gate.

“Why don't you take me home?” demanded Cara, when the doctor put up his soaked arms to take her out of the buggy.

“What do you think it would do to your father?” he muttered savagely, “seeing you like this? Nannie will take care of you,” he added more softly. “Come!”

Cara said no more. She obeyed him, looking a little frightened, and the two went, dripping, up Solomon's squash-colored steps, and crossed his chocolate threshold. Solomon was not at home. He was in his cranberry swamp, happily engaged in swindling an unsophisticated pork-packer out of a front price for a back acre.

But Nannie gracefully met the unexpected freshet tossed upon her hospitality.

Miss Sterling came meekly into the doctor's dingy office, when he sent for her twenty minutes

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later. She had never been there before. She did not look about the barren room; but she felt the rudeness of the struggle which it represented, to her last luxurious nerve. She wore one of Nannie's white silk blouse waists and her gray cloth skirt. Cara's wet hair hung in two long braids. Her face had its charming, timid look. Clyde came with her. The collie had a ceremonious and rather a haughty air.

"I always was convinced," she began nervously, "that Nannie had my dressmaker. Now there's no doubt about it. Just see!"

Dane made no answer to this. He had risen at her entrance, and stood looking at her quite steadily.

"Do you know," ventured Cara, "that when you swam after us out there, in the water, I was afraid you'd overtake us — I was afraid Clyde would let *me* go, to snap at *you*. Then where should I have been, or you, either, if he had held your head under?"

Dane met the mischief in her eyes with an ominous solemnity. He did not speak.

"Dear Clyde," cooed the girl, "dear Clyde!" She lifted her embarrassed eyes; but the doctor had no mercy on her. Clyde regarded the two gravely, and, after a moment's consideration, placed himself between them. He did not growl now or

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express any displeasure, but his fine eyes had a melancholy look.

Dane stood with his dark head thrown back, and his square shoulders very straight.

"Have you read my letter?"

"Yes, Dr. Dane."

"Carefully?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"What have you to say to it?"

"Nothing," said Cara, distinctly.

He wheeled and turned to the window. She could hear his hard, short breathing.

"Very well," he said. "Shall I see you to your carriage? I have telephoned for Tibbs."

"Doctor," pleaded the girl, "do you think you ought to make *me* say it?"

"I would if I could!" gasped Dane, rapturously. He took two steps towards her. "If you loved me, you would be my wife," he said, "in spite of all."

She pushed the collie gently away, and stood troubled and irresolute. Dane held out his shaking arms. With a beautiful gesture, half royal, half suppliant, she crossed the little space between them.

"Oh, do you understand," he cried manfully, "what this means — what you are doing? It would be wrong for me to let you make a mis-

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take. It's for all your life, remember. And we may have to wait a great while. And I'm not a very noble fellow — I'm full of faults and weaknesses. You don't know even what they are. I can't even swear to make you happy — only that I shall care for nothing else on earth except to try. I love you . . . so much . . .”

His voice dropped.

“And I,” she tried to tell him, “I —” She buried her sweet face on the arm that held her off.

“I am in the undertow,” she breathed. “Let me drown.”

A long, profound sigh arose, and filled the room, and fell. It was like the effort of an inarticulate soul to say something. It came from the collie, forgotten for the first time in his life, who stood between the woman and the man.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Dane took her to her carriage, a patient intercepted him, and he was forced to go back to his office and to let her ride home alone.

There was a certain significance in this trifling incident which did not escape the prevision of the girl's heart. She remembered a thing some woman — probably it was Mrs. Strang — once said to her: —

“My dear, never be a doctor's wife, unless you are willing to gather him up in twelve basketfuls and feast on the fragments.”

Already, at the brink of joy, the inexorable claim of her lover's strenuous calling pushed her aside. Always she must yield to this right — she whose fortunate young life had yielded to so little, and had evaded the strenuous like perfumed air; she to whom the word inexorable was written in an unknown tongue. But nothing troubled her. Her lips stirred. “I love him,” they said.

When he hurried to her that evening he found her more at ease than himself. She met him on the avenue; he thought she had been waiting for him; the sun was just dipping through the thick

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trees; lances of light quivered about her, and seemed to strike at him, as if to hold him off. He stood for a moment bareheaded.

"You don't repent?" he challenged. "You are not sorry?"

Smiling, she lifted her eyes; a beautiful mist melted across them; he felt it would be rudeness to look beyond it. He counted himself unworthy to know how she loved him. When he moved towards her it was as if one of the lances of light pierced him through the heart. He felt unfit to touch her hand. He could have stooped, and put the hem of her dress to his lips. A singular embarrassment overcame him, and in his effort to free himself from it his mind fastened upon the first trifle that fell in its way.

"Why, you have still got on Nannie's dress!" he said. Her head drooped a little.

"Do you mind?" she asked timidly. "I thought you would like it. I kept it on . . . to please you. I thought . . . I had it on this morning, and it was the first time . . . it was the first dress that . . ."

He crushed the unfinished words from her lips. He drew her apart, among the trees. The sun had now dropped. The delicate moment that is neither sunset nor twilight enveloped them. Her face, gently upturned, lay back upon his arm.

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"Cara!" he said, "Cara! Dear!" He felt as if that one word held his whole soul. It was like a cup into which his being had been poured. At that moment there was nothing more to offer her. Her pure, flower-like face had an expression before which the lover's rapture stood still. It seemed to him a profanity to kiss her. But when he had kissed her, it seemed to him worship. And the first seeming blended into the last, and the last remained with him, and it held (no man can tell us how) the ineffable essence of both seemings and of both feelings, while yet it appeared to be but one.

They moved apart silently, and walked among the heavy trees, by the footpath that led past the chasm to the sea. The first man and the first woman walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and God called them. The lover was the one to remember that they were not in Eden. The girl was like a spirit in a celestial swoon; she might have gone dreaming on, forever.

"Dear," he said, lingering on the strangeness and preciousness of the word, "I have a good deal to say to your father; I cannot have him think that I do not realize the position in which I am placing you; and perhaps the sooner it's over, the better."

"He is very tired," said Cara. "He has gone to

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bed. But he will see you, if you wish. I told him you might come."

"Have you told your father—" began Dane, startled.

"I have told him everything," said Cara, quietly.

"But what will he think?" cried Dane, in real distress. "A struggling, starving fellow like me, keeping you waiting,—so long. Why, it may be years!" groaned Dane. "That's the worst of it."

"I did n't think," said Cara, almost inaudibly, "that it need be *quite* so long. There is . . . enough," she added timidly.

"But I won't take you until I can take care of you!" quivered Dane. "I'm not that kind of fellow—to woo a rich man's daughter and live on my father-in-law. I ought to have been the one to explain to him. Oh, what must he think of me? I'm not sunk to that. I can't be put in that position!" The veins on Dane's forehead stood out, and throbbed. Cara's uncompromising candor of soul would have made it clear to her that she had seen him angry—for the first time—and that before the rapture of their first kisses had died upon their lips; but her elect and exquisite womanliness closed its eyes before this first strain upon its vision. With a sweet dignity which would not permit itself to stoop to see the irritation on her lover's manner

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—sparing him even to himself, already — she gently said:—

“It is not my father’s money. It is my own. It was Mother’s when she was alive. There is enough — there is a good deal. And we can . . . whenever you wish. It shall be as you wish. I do not mean to —” She broke off, crimson to her brows.

“Shall I throw myself on my knees?” cried Dane, choking. “Or off the rocks? I’m not fit to be anywhere else — but in one of those two places.”

They had left the trees behind them, and were standing on the edge of the great chasm, which was filled by the passion of the rising tide. It was heavy twilight now. Cara looked down.

“If you went over there,” she said steadily, “I don’t know but I might go, too. And if you went on your knees, I should lift you up.”

“Lift me up!” entreated Dane. He fell, in the dusk, and bowed his face before her, and put a fold of her dress to his lips.

Across the ravine, strolling through the shrubbery towards the bridge, a massive figure, moving slowly, paused. Bareheaded, and smiling, with the attitude and motions which betoken ease of mind and heart, the preacher set his foot upon the iron bridge; it trembled, expectant of his tread, but he

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did not cross. Carved from the departing day and the advancing night, like a startled purpose or arrested feeling, he might have been struck out of the granite on which he stood. It was darkening fast about him. All his strong outlines dimmed before they turned and reassumed the foliage and blossom of his own garden. From granite to shadow he melted imperceptibly. It was now dark. The preacher walked unsteadily; his head sunk upon his breast. The figures across the chasm had not stirred. In the gulf, the passion of the rising tide mounted with an inexorable sound.

Dane came out from Mr. Sterling's room with brilliant eyes. The details of the interview between the two, known only to themselves, had left the young man his self-respect and his ecstasy. In the flush of these, he drew the girl's hand powerfully through his arm and proudly led her to her father. Cara felt the new element in his touch; it filled her with delight and fear; this was the moment when her feeling came out of the glamour in which it had floated—a beautiful and dreaming consciousness—and faced the conditions of life. As she had come in from the twilight, and the illusion of the sea, and the bewilderment of the rising tide, abruptly to the lighted house, and the familiar sights of the sick room—so the scenery in her

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heart had shifted suddenly. All that was powerful in the force of habit, all that was sacred in family relations and in old friendships, all that had dignity in the atmosphere of class, assumed a value which she had never felt before. Suddenly she perceived that she understood what it all meant. Her heart brimmed with a tender longing to share the cup of her joy with her father. She thought of her dead mother wistfully. She wished that she could kneel and lay her head upon that phantom lap. It had not suggested itself to her before, that she had burst into the garden of love without a guiding hand.

“Dear Papa!” she said helplessly.

He laid his high-veined hand upon her head, for she had dropped upon her knees beside his bed, and soothed her feebly.

“There, there, my child! It’s all right, Cara. I am not strong enough to-night to talk it over, but it’s all right. I am very fond of Dr. Dane. It is not—precisely such a marriage as the—ladies of our family have been accustomed to make, my daughter. But I don’t know that this matters . . . much. If he makes you happy—”

“May God do so to me, and more also, if I do not make her happy!” interrupted Dane, with ungovernable fervor.

“I am very fond of Dr. Dane,” repeated the in-

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valid wearily, and turned his head upon his pillow. He did not respond to the lover's passionate objurgation; and its evident, though impetuous, sincerity sunk into a silence which was not without embarrassment.

"Papa," said Cara, rising from her knees, "I want you to understand. I cannot deceive you about this. It makes me very happy that you feel so — Oh, happier than I know how to say. And I should have been miserable if it had been any other way. But, Papa, if *nobody* felt so — if the whole world went against us — I should marry Dr. Dane."

"And don't you suppose I knew that?" asked Rollinstall Sterling, with a sombre smile. His gray lashes twitched and worked rapidly, as they did when he was under much emotion — a nervous habit acquired since he had been an invalid.

"But I did n't," interposed Cara, "I did not know a girl could feel like this. I did not understand about it. I don't care what marriages the ladies of our family have been accustomed to make. I could live on a desert island — with him, Papa." All the scenery of her feeling had shifted swiftly back. The force of habit and the usual relations of life retreated like stage settings with which a drama had done. With a beautiful gesture she turned to Dane, and laid her hand in his.

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"I could starve," she said.

The nervous flutter of the invalid's eyelids increased until the twitching became almost convulsive. He seemed so exhausted that the daughter and the doctor reproached themselves for allowing him to undergo so much excitement. The doctor prescribed something, and they left him alone for the night.

In the middle of the dim drawing-room Dane stood for the first time, a lover accepted and accredited, and held out his arms. Cara crept to them gently. She did not speak, and he did not urge her. He led her to the cretonne sofa, with the roses, and they sat down together. Cara left her hand in his, but held her head erect upon her own shoulders. He felt that she retreated from him at that moment, he did not know why. Cara did not find it necessary to tell him, and he hesitated to ask her. A certain delicate dignity, peculiar to herself, and always unexpected in so gentle a woman, folded her apart from him. She did not know how to say, she did not even wish to say, what she felt just then.

Suddenly his own words crowded into her thought:—

"It is for all your life, remember."

She turned and put up her arms; as his clasped her, she lifted her lips.

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“Oh, be good to me,” she said. “There won’t be . . . anybody else.”

It did not occur to Cara until the next day that she would be expected to announce her betrothal to her cousin at once. She waited until afternoon for him to make his daily visit to his uncle’s house; but he did not come. She watched for his leisurely, large outlines on the iron bridge, until she grew uncomfortable, and so sat down and wrote an impulsive note, which said :—

DEAR COUSIN STERLING, — We have missed you all day.

CARA.

She had, in fact, called Kathleen to carry this, when she changed her mind abruptly, tore up the note, and went herself. She ran lightly across the bridge, without looking down into the chasm,—a thing she did not always like to do,—and hurried through the garden. As she approached the house her feet began to obstruct her, and she lagged. He was sitting on his piazza with a book; but he was not reading. His face was turned towards the sea. There was a southeasterly, and the surf had its raving, thwarted sound; it was like the rage of some primeval life, conscious of hurt, and ominous of pangs to come.

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She stood still at the foot of the piazza steps, in her light summer dress with its rose ribbon, and her shade hat hung across one arm, a girlish figure, looking younger than her years. She glanced up at him like a child or a penitent, coaxingly.

"We have missed you all day," she began, with conscious awkwardness. "I came over to see — I came over to tell you —"

He uttered a few inaudible words, and with the something beautiful and reverential in his manner which he cherished for her, led her up the steps. She would not sit, and he stood beside her on the broad piazza. Jane crossed the hall and shut the door, and her footsteps ceased upon the ear in the silent, lonely house.

"Why, Cousin Sterling!" said Cara, "you don't look well. Is anything the matter?"

"You came to confess to me — not I to you, Cousin Carolyn," he answered, smiling.

Her heart leaned towards him now, bent with the pressure of a lifetime spent in leaning on him. She felt as if she could have sat on the floor and buried her face on his big knee like a very little girl. She wanted his blessing just then, as much as she had ever wanted anything in her life.

"Cousin Sterling," she began, turning swiftly white about the mouth, in a fashion she had when

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she was deeply moved, "I have promised to marry Papa's physician, Dr. Dane. I came to tell you. I thought you would come over this morning."

"Never mind, child," he said gently.

"I hope — we hope you will like it," faltered Cara, in unconcealed embarrassment. Sterling Hart walked the length of the piazza, and stood, looking seaward and surfward, silently.

"Cousin Cara," he said, without turning around, "do you love this man?"

"I do." Unconsciously Cara found the phraseology of the marriage service on her trembling lips.

"With all your heart?"

"With all my heart."

"And all your soul?"

Cara felt frightened, and something hurt at the pertinacity and solemnity of the preacher. A flip-pant reply rose to her lips: "Can't I get my soul out of your diocese, Cousin Sterling?" Afterwards she was glad that she did not say it.

"Is there any difference?" she began in a trembling voice. But it faltered away into an impetuous, half-fretful cry: —

"Oh; *bless* me, Cousin Sterling! I *do* need it. Papa is so sick — and I have n't any mother — and you've always made up for everything all my life!"

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He turned slowly, and walked the length of the piazza towards her. He had a remote, exalted look. Old Bible words came curiously to Cara's mind; something about a face which "shone as it had been that of an angel."

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee," said Sterling Hart. He laid his hand upon her soft, bowed head; and she received his benediction silently. She wondered why it did not make her feel as much happier as she had expected. But she did not speak, nor he, while he conducted her quietly through the garden and over the iron bridge. There he left her. He retraced his steps across the bridge, and they stood for a moment, with the chasm between them, before he lifted his hand and, smiling, turned away.

"Cousin Sterling," she said, "did you never think of it — all this while?"

He shook his head. "Not once in all this while."

Cara would have been glad if her cousin had shown a more pronounced pleasure in her engagement; but her mind did not dwell on his eccentricities. It had now ceased to matter to her what anybody thought or felt about her affairs. The world and all that was therein looked small to her, and distant, like a dwindling planet seen from a whirling, rose-red star. The system of things

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narrowed to a dizzy spot, in which she and her lover stood alone. Claspings arms and clinging lips bewildered her. The passion in his vows made a rainbow mist about her; she looked through it with virginal, young eyes, and saw the man as a god walking. Her thoughts of marriage were vague and delicate; fearing and trusting, she leaned towards it, not unwilling.

"It will always be like this," she dreamed. "I shall never be lonely again. Every day there will be a new happiness."

She had been a reserved, shy girl, and had not talked with other women about many things of which women speak more freely than they did in an elder day. She did not tell her intimates what her offers of marriage had been. She was used to being called old-fashioned because she did not discuss engagements or family difficulties. No person thought of retailing scandal to her. Her ideas of the great relation of life were gained chiefly from her reading; poetry, romance, and fiction had taught her that love was an eternal fact; that the true thing was indestructible, and that happiness was to be had by believing in it. The novels ended on the wedding day. On the perfume of the orange blossom joy fed, and found immortal nutrition, as some strange being of an unknown race — some essence evanescent, but fixed — some or-

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ganism of fire and pearl—may maintain life upon ether, or light, or foam.

The motherless girl shared her visions of the future with no one. Her lover was the last to know what they were. When he suggested a speedy marriage, she assented with a sweet and gentle readiness to meet this wish of his, as she chose to meet his every one. She was not conscious, at this time, of many wishes of her own. She felt herself extinguished in her love. She was an obliterated wave in a mighty tide.

They were married in October. It was late in the month, on the twenty-eighth of a series of wonderful days which were long remembered on the East Shore as having made that autumn splendid. Clouds found it impossible to cover the sun. Fogs blew in, only to fly out. It rained at night, to shine in the morning. The colors of the water were those that north winds paint, with southerly moods between: purples, greens, and bronzes, deep agate effects, and sepia stretches of seaweed exposed by wind and tide; the lead-gray fishing schooners were reefed to the teeth, careening like racing yachts upon a horizon line that had the hues of malachite, and seemed as solid. Then, the next day behold, all the blues on the palette tossing wildly, steel shadows, iron gulfs, the

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smoke of blown spray, and warm rocks frosted with unfrozen foam. Perhaps at sundown all the glorious rage would yield and cuddle down like a spaniel; there would be left a milk-white sea, fair as a midsummer calm, with crawling hulls and all canvas up, against a volcanic sky, cooled by lakes of beryl.

Scarcely a breath would meet the cheek; the surf in the ravine sobbed away; the summer of autumn crept in as if it meant to stay all winter. Flowers lived late in the garden, and the fall dandelions burned in the grass steadily.

It soon fell out that Cara did not want a wedding, but a marriage.

"I should like to go out and stand on the iron bridge some afternoon at high tide, with only Cousin Sterling to marry us, and Papa to witness — and Clyde, of course — nobody else, except the sea," she said. "And there's a little place in the mountains where I had a happy time one summer with Janie Dale. She's a girl I went to school with. I'd like to spend Sunday at Dipdown; then come right home and stay. It would spoil it to travel about. I should like —" But she did not say what more she would like. She wanted a star to themselves, in fact — they two to be in a world together. This not offering itself as a practical honeymoon schedule, she sighed, and accepted the bridal con-

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ditions of her own planet to a certain extent. She waived the iron bridge. She consented to the usual necessary relatives, and wrote to Janie Dale. And one day she expressed a wish that Dr. Frost be bidden to her marriage, with two or three other family friends.

But Thomas Frost found himself prevented by important professional engagements. He wrote her a ceremonious note, and hoped she would be happy with the man of her choice.

The man of her choice stood in the centre of the bridal group, a proud and solitary figure. "I have n't a relation left but my brother Clay," he sighed, "and I don't even know where he is."

"Never mind, dear!" said Cara. She had already acquired the habit of comforting him with this wholly womanly, half-maternal phrase when any trifle troubled him. Sometimes she had moments of wishing that he had a mother or a sister to put arms about her, and say, "We will love you because he does"; to tell how good a son he was, how kind a brother, what a tender husband he would make, and how glad a wife she ought to be. But she never told him that. And Dane came to his wedding day with only a friend or two—university men—and at Cara's pretty insistence, Solomon Hops and Nannie.

"It's natur'," said Solomon Hops, "an' when

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you 've said a thing 's natur', you 've teched a great subjec'."

But Cara consoled herself for all lapses in her perfect happiness by tying white ribbons on Clyde.

The wonderful weather seemed eternal. The wedding day was one of those miracles of the New England climate which October reserves to itself. It was April at dawn, it was June at noon, it was September at dusk. There were autumn leaves and dandelions, there were rose berries and live pansies, there were open windows and wood fires, there was a South wind and a tossing surf. Cara wore her mother's veil; it wrapped her soft, unornamented silk from head to hem, and made a mist about her. With bridal eyes she sought Dane's trustfully. His swam at her look.

"Thou God!" said the young man to his soul, "make me fit for this!"

He could not have told when he had prayed before.

So the Reverend Sterling Hart married Cara and Chanceford Dane. It was said by those who heard him, and who knew him well, that the preacher read the vows of the marriage service as they were never read before, by him, or any other man, giving to them such solemnity, such sanctity as the world, which makes of marriage a merry thing or a light choice, cannot be expected to

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understand, being unworthy. All that was precious and noble in his own high nature, all that was sheltered and sacred in his lonely imagination and great white heart, seemed to lavish itself upon the sacrament which made his cousin wife to the man she loved. There were more tears than smiles at Cara's unworldly wedding; but they were such tears as men and women go glad for and afterwards do not regret or forget.

When she had gone upstairs, and it was said that the carriage was at the door, that the train would soon be due, that the time was short, the preacher beckoned Chanceford Dane, and drew him into her father's room, the only spot where they could be undisturbed. And here he shut the door. But when he had done this, Sterling Hart did not find the words that he wished to say. He stood at his great height. His eyes dwelt upon the young man's ecstatic face with a sad sincerity. He scanned it feature by feature. Suddenly he stretched out both his hands.

"Oh, be kind!" he faltered. "Be kind to her!"

But when the bridegroom would have answered him, hot with the hurt and amazement of the words, the preacher laid a finger on Dane's opening lips. He stood colossal and commanding: as if he wore the authority of the sons of God. With

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bowed head and dumb mouth Dane left his presence.

The preacher had come down to the end of the avenue alone, to see her drive away. The splendor of the weather had fallen, and a fog, like the smoke of a battle, was rolling up from the sea; it came between his eyes and her face, as she looked back once, he thought a little wistfully, from the carriage window. Something tugged at his hand, and a low sound like a half-suppressed human moan attracted his attention. He looked down.

Clyde, in his broad, white ribbons, stood there mournfully; he did not seek to follow the carriage; he lifted his eyes with a hurt expression to the man.

"Clyde!" said Sterling Hart, "she's forgotten us both."

As soon as he had said the words, it came to him that when she leaned to the carriage window with that lovely wistfulness of hers she had not been thinking of him at all. She was looking for Clyde.

In the carriage neither spoke. Cara leaned against the arm that compelled her, silently and gently. But when they had boarded the train,

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she found it necessary to talk of little matters — as if they had been acquaintances, or friends.

She said, "I missed Kathleen at the wedding. I was very fond of her. It is five weeks since she was married."

And Dane said, "Did she marry that waiter from the hotel?" eagerly, as if he cared. Then Cara talked about her father and her cousin, and of family affairs and plans, as if he had been making an evening call, and would soon go, so that she must say all that she had on her mind at once.

"Papa is so well to-day! Did you notice? And he seemed not to mind it at all. It is just like Cousin Sterling to take him to town and carry all the care until I — until we go home. Cousin Sterling always carries all the care. And when we go back, we are to have the house all to ourselves. And the sea. And Clyde. Don't you miss Clyde?" asked the bride, naïvely.

"It had not occurred to me," replied Dane; "I'll try to miss him if you want me to."

They chatted like neighbors, and discussed their wedding as if they had been guests. But as the train drew into the hills, Cara grew grave and still. When he lifted her out of the cars at Dip-down, he was troubled to see that she was pale, and had a homesick look. She refused to ride,

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and insisted on walking with him to the hotel. There were but a few guests left, and they were all indoors, for the mountain night was chilly. A huge pine-wood fire was leaping on the hearth in the large hall. Cara's color came back when she saw it. She clung to him suddenly.

"Oh, the mountains frighten me! I'm a sea girl. I always was. But that looks as if there were people in the world. We'll go home Monday, won't we, dear?"

"We'll go home now, if you say so!" he said, stopping short.

"Why, there's my cottage!" cried Cara. "The one where I stayed with Janie Dale. It's all lighted up. Why, we're not going *there*? Oh, that *was* nice of you!" she sighed gratefully, for he led her into the cottage. Fires were there, too, leaping on every hearth; the bare, white-plastered walls were hung with cloth of gold; the scent of unseen roses stirred the warm air.

"Come," he said comfortably, "take off your hat. They'll send supper over when you're ready."

Some one in the hotel parlor, at the piano, was singing industriously, and the words came over to the cottage quite plainly:—

"I have no home, no place, no life,
But only in thy heart."

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Cara stood for a moment listening, before she turned and looked at him. It was a look which would follow a man to his last dream; an angel, or a ghost, as he himself elected.

Dane sank slowly to his knees, and hid his bowed face upon his young wife's hand.

CHAPTER VIII

THE preacher mounted the stairs slowly. They were wide stairs, and low, easy to climb, but he so rarely trod them that the act had in itself a certain ceremonious strangeness: to this the marked gentleness of his footfall added a delicate impression. His figure bent slightly, with the effort to reduce the effect of his great weight upon the padded steps. One would have thought that he was about to enter the chamber of death, or danger. But Mrs. Dane was convalescing rapidly, and perfectly. Her little boy was three weeks old, and Mr. Hart had not seen the mother or the child.

When the nurse admitted him to his cousin's sitting-room, he said, "I thank you, Miss Black," in the tone of one upon whom an undeserved and incalculable favor had been bestowed. He stood for a moment silently, touched by a certain embarrassment which at times possessed him, and which in a man of his large acquaintance with life was noted either with perplexity or admiration, according to the temperament of the observer. In fact, this modest self-consciousness was

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really a more beautiful thing than most persons were capable of understanding.

The young mother sat in a tall, cushioned chair, with her baby in her arms. The chair had been moved up from below stairs, and like the rest of the furniture in the drawing-room, wore the old-fashioned cretonne, white with pink roses. One of these looked over Cara's head at Sterling Hart as he came into the room. Her pallor sent a visible shock through him for the instant; but the radiance of her helped him to recover himself. She sat smiling and shining as if she leaned towards him out of a world where to smile and to shine were the only possible duties of a woman's spirit. She was draped in soft wool — for the late September afternoon was chilly — and the stuff was of pale rose color, and fell about her in long lines. The baby on her lap was folded in white, embroidered delicately; it wore a little old-fashioned lace cap; its head lay upon her long, maternal arm; both her hands were busy with the novel task of preserving the poise of the little creature upon her yet unaccustomed lap. In the deep hearth a fire was singing softly; the draperies at the windows of the small room were white, and transparent; the walls were of pink, and pale; a warm, delicate tint suffused the atmosphere. The preacher's lips opened slowly: —

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"The Madonna — of the Rose," they said.

"Oh, Cousin Sterling!" Cara held out one hand, which he took so reverently that he could hardly have been said to grasp it; and when he had touched it, he laid it back slowly in its former position, about the child. "Plenty of other people can say pretty things. It always took you to say the real ones, Cousin Sterling — the deep-down ones, the things with roots. See now! What do you think of him? On your sacred honor as the most eminent preacher in this country — how do you *like* my baby?"

"How can I possibly tell, Cousin Carolyn? It is your baby."

"Say you see how much he looks like his father," demanded Cara, anxiously. "He will have the eyes. And I am sure he is going to have that white lock on the top of his head. I should n't wonder if he were gray there by the time he goes to kindergarten."

"I do not see the least resemblance," replied Mr. Hart, without smiling. He put out his large hand and touched the baby's fingers, which sprawled in his palm.

"Like a red spider," observed the young mother, candidly. "They always do look like some of the inferior species — at first. I don't know why I flattered myself that my baby would escape the

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universal doom. Chanceford says one of his patients asked if it were a Maltese."

"I can guess who that was," replied Mr. Hart, with a shrug of his massive shoulders.

"Can you?" asked Cara, indifferently. "I am sure she has no children, at all events."

"No, she has no children."

"I am glad you don't think it was funny. Chanceford did. But I am not sure that I understand why you don't."

"Probably because it is your baby. Do you think I should mangle it if I held it a minute? I kept one a whole afternoon once, on a parish call, to let a poor woman go out and get the air. It cried two hours."

Cara laid the child in her cousin's arms, and he returned the little creature, as he had held it, without remark. Across his face there passed a sensitive expression, half feeling, half light.

"You are well?" he asked abruptly. "That is, I mean, you are gaining all the time?"

"I am *perfectly* well!" cried Cara, girlishly. "I am to be let out on the piazza next week—with the baby. And then I am to go to drive—with the baby. But the only thing is, Clyde can't go. We have to tie Clyde up. Did you notice? He is jealous. He is frightfully jealous. So Chanceford chained him. He snapped at the baby; I mean,

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Clyde did. That is, he pretended to. I am sure Clyde could n't really. He cares too much; for me, I mean."

"It does not occur to you that there might be a relation between caring and snapping," interrupted the preacher. "Do you still keep to the name you chose for the child?"

"It was my husband's mother's name, you know. It seems to me a beautiful name. But we shall always call him Joy," said Cara. She repeated the word, fondling the baby with the two liquid vowels. "Joy! Joy!" she cried. There was that in her rapture which dazzled Sterling Hart, and his own eyes filled, as if they had been struck sun blind or snow blind. Cara did not look at him. She kissed the child. Under the tender ardency of her caress the baby cried, and when she began to remember that the world contained any other form of human life except that which she had contributed to it, Mr. Hart had left the room.

Cara thought that he might have supposed it was pins. It did not occur to the Madonna of the Roses that the surging of her own happiness could have risen to the tide mark of emotion in her cousin's feeling. She listened dreamily to his retreating footsteps, and turned her cheek upon the baby's head.

"Miss Black?" she called. "Before my husband

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comes up, will you get me some fresh lace? This one at my throat is crumpled. And Miss Black? You have n't heard him come in, have you?"

The preacher went down the stairs quietly. His high head was bowed. Was he musing or praying? It would not have been easy for him to say. He was conscious of breathing rarefied air. It seemed to him that he had found a wayside altar on some mountain of snow. His mood was remote and elate.

It was with a sense of disturbance to it that he found himself repeating:—

"The Children of Alice call Bartrum Father."

He came down and into the hall with grave, devout eyes, and that tender curve upon his Roman lips which those who knew him loved and watched for. He was about to open the front door when he remembered that he had come in by the side piazza and left something in the dining-room—a book or a cane, in his abstraction he could not recall what—and turned in at the open door to capture the truant impression. As he did so, he was aware of the odor of cigarettes, and the subsidence of subdued voices.

The room was occupied. Mrs. Douce Marriot sat in one of the tall carved chairs, languidly puffing at an Egyptian sultana; her free hand played

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with a long, slender glass, half full, upon the table; she assumed a graceful pose; her fading face, still to be called handsome, had an attractive vivacity; her tailor-made gown of bright dark cloth expressed her celebrated figure. Dr. Dane stood near her at the sideboard. The glass in his hand was emptied. His color was slightly raised, and his laughing eyes amused themselves.

The two turned as the preacher entered. He stood for a moment and regarded them. He did not smile. But Mrs. Marriot scintillated:—

“Oh, Mr. Hart! Such a pleasure!” She rose and made as if to extend her hand, but changed her mind. The preacher returned her bow coldly. Douce Marriot did not commit the mistake of offering explanations. She talked about the baby, whom, she observed, she had hoped to be allowed to see.

“At least, incidentally,” added Mrs. Marriot. “And now, Dr. Dane, about that prescription. Can I have it filled here, or must one send to town? I have such a picturesque neuralgia!” she suggested. “It is worthy of framing. I have to tie my face up in Portuguese silk shawls.”

“I am sorry,” said Sterling Hart, speaking rapidly and mechanically, “to have intruded upon a professional call.”

Mrs. Marriot felt that the preacher studiously

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avoided an emphasis upon the adjective. She followed his retreating figure with a shrewd, brilliant glance. Dane put down the decanter, which he had lifted.

"How did you find her?" he asked lightly. "And the boy? How do you like the fellow?"

Mr. Hart did not reply. There was that in the young father's tone which was offensive to him; it had the modern irreverence, the spirit of the age, which is capable of saying: The mother and the kid. The preacher took his book — it was "The Essays of Elia" — went out to the side piazza, and closed the door between himself and the two.

They crossed his imagination like bacchantes on a piece of pottery. As he stepped out upon the lawn he found himself repeating dully: —

"The Children of Alice call Bartrum Father."

The descending sun flung out one of the banners of advancing autumn upon a windy sky, whose clouds marched and countermarched with the disorder of retreat. Upon the sea the color was wild and capricious, escaping from pure yellow to blood red, and before the eye had named the tint, dropping to cold purples and surly bronze. As the preacher trod the worn grass path which led from the lawn to the bridge, a gleam like an arrow of vengeance shot across the horizon, and made, to

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his fancy, as if it tried to enter the ravine. The tide was high and heavy; it had its savage tone; this deepened as he approached the gorge, and raged so that it quite muffled to his ear the sound of human voices rising from a source unseen, and not audient to him until he had pushed past a tangle of overreaching shrubbery, and come, in fact, almost to the bridge. This was wet with spray, and trembled stolidly, as iron does under shock, with the reverberation of the surf below. As he hurried on, uncomfortably conscious of inexplicable tragedy, the cries increased and became articulate.

“Blank you! —— you! —— you to ——! I’ll fling your —— —— carcass to blank and good riddance to it!”

Then came the answering yell:—

“Help! Help! Help! Murder! Help! Dr. Dane! Mr. Hart! Somebody! Anybody! Murder! Murder!”

“—— you to ——! —— you to ——!”

Between gasps of rage the first voice returned this monotonous anathema with the persistence of a savage whose imagination is incapable of varying his profanity.

Crouched beneath a group of lindens, whose low-lying, well-trimmed branches, sweeping to the ground, almost covered him from sight, knelt a

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white-haired, hard-faced man. This was Solomon Hops. He had no coat; his woolen shirt-sleeves were rolled to his shoulders; his sturdy arms gripped at something which he was holding over the edge of the chasm. His face, purple with passion, glared down.

Mr. Hart had pushed, running through the lindens; but when he saw what he saw, he stopped and trod quietly. For he perceived how tremendous would be the consequences of any mistake on his part. He dared not excite the old man by startling him, but not to interfere was out of the question. Writhing in the clutches of Solomon Hops — oaths above, and death below — a human figure hung partly supported by a strip of shelving rock a few feet below the edge of the ravine. This shot one hundred feet down to the cauldron that boils through the deepest and angriest fissure in the granite of the East Shore.

Although the twilight was closing fast, it was not so dark but that Sterling Hart was able to recognize the figure of the doomed and shrieking man. It was Timothy George, the caterer. His cry came up, raucous and wheezing, like the cry of a dying animal: —

“Mr. Hart! Mr. Hart! Save me! He’s a maniac! He’s a murderer! Oh, save me!”

“And he’s a brute beast!” raved Solomon

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Hops. "I histed him over, and I'll heave him down. Lemme alone, Mr. Hart. This ain't your business. It ain't anybody's but mine and his'n. Lemme be, sir. I don't care if I do swing for it. I am goin' to send this fellow to ——, so help me God!"

"Oh, come, come, Mr. Hops!" said Hart, quietly. He spoke with what might be called the peremptory tact of one who is accustomed to controlling masses of men. "Whatever wrong he has done you I'll see righted. But if you don't look out you'll let him fall. It is n't possible that you really mean to commit murder, of course. You have given him a good round scare—why not let him go at that? Here, I'll help you. Firmly now, gentle there! It's going to be harder getting him up than it was letting him down. Perhaps it is just as well I happened along."

While he was speaking the preacher had thrown himself flat upon the brow of the rocks, and thrust down his mighty arms.

"Blank him to ——!" repeated Solomon Hops. "Lemme heave him over. He ain't *fit* to live. He ain't fit to trod the solid yearth again."

"If that is the case," said the preacher, soothingly, "I'll back you up, Mr. Hops, and you shall settle your quarrel, man to man. You shan't settle it this way. Ease off a little till I get a firm grip.

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No? You won't? Stand back, there then!" cried Sterling Hart, commandingly. "Back, I say. I won't have you commit murder — not before my eyes. Back there! I'll get him up alone."

This, with the giant in his arms, the clergyman did. The scramble, the struggle, the shouts, the cries, the tremendous strain of muscle answering to muscle — these occupied one of the immeasurable atoms of time in which lives or souls may be saved or lost. A wave from the churning chasm clambered a hundred feet after the cowering creature who had escaped it, and soaked him as he crawled from the edge of the gulf, and fell sprawling. The fellow's face was scarcely whiter than that of the preacher, who stood towering above him. Solomon Hops made a gurgling noise in his throat.

"There's other ways. I kicked him offen my doorsteps, and he run. I chased him and then I done it. But there's other ways."

"If you'll tell me what the trouble is," began Sterling Hart, with authoritative persuasion. "But you see you have n't."

He still stood between the two men, whom, unnoticed by them, he was gradually drawing from the edge of the ravine. It was darkening so fast that the three figures melted into the dusk, and looked like trees or shrubbery fantastically cut in

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the human form and endowed with human passions, and the voices that expressed them.

"'Tain't fit to tell," gasped Solomon Hops. "It has to do with a lady. It has to do with a girl — mine — my girl."

"Ah!" said Hart, in a tone of stinging contempt. "It is that, is it?"

The scorn in his voice was like the lash of a whip in the hands of an archangel. In all his life Timothy George had never known what it was to feel such shame before. He cowered visibly.

"I'd been drinking," he muttered.

"He insulted her," panted the old man. "My girl! He took her to Sandasket on that there blank trolley line. If her mother'd been a-livin' — but livin' mothers let 'em do it, and there you are. She didn't take any money with her — the way girls do when they go off with a fellow. She trusted him. She was keepin' company with him. She said, 'Father, we'll take the nine o'clock car.' It come to be ten o'clock; it come to be eleven, and got to be midnight. Mr. Hart, I set watchin' for her all that night. 'Long about five o'clock, when the birds were singin', she come crawlin' home. 'He let the last train go,' she said. 'Father, he insulted me, and he's the only man that ever did.' (Blank you to — you —!) She dars n't go to the police because of the talk and the news-

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papers. She — she — she — I don't know how she done it, for she don't tell. Maybe she 'd 'a' told her mother more. But Nannie got away and run. She got out into the road and she began to run. Nannie she run till she dropped, and fell, and up and run again — in the country, in the dark, at one o'clock at night — and so she struck the trolley line and walked it — through the woods and cross the meaders — thirteen miles the whole way home, and tumbled down come mornin' on her father's steps. . . . My girl! Her that everybody set so much by — so pretty, and gradooated at the high school — and dressed so delicate, and has such ways — like a lady — and could of had her pick of anybody — not a fellow in Balsam Groves but would of asked her if he darst — and never a word ag'in her all her days more 'n ag'in the Virgin Mary settin' on a star in heaven. . . . *Nannie!* And now it's all over this town —”

The preacher's clutch tightened on the coat collar of the collapsing figure that he held at arm's length from the reach of the old man's fury. As if he had been a rat, and the distinguished divine a terrier, Timothy George felt himself shaken to and fro in two tremendous hands.

“What have you got to say for yourself?” thundered Mr. Hart.

“I'd been drinking,” pleaded Timothy. “If

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there's any talk, I'll marry her; I'm ready any time."

"You!" A voice like the voice of a formless spirit vibrated out of the dark. "Marry *you*? If you were the only man left upon this earth,—and the whole world were packed with women talking about me,—I'd be cut in inch pieces by their scissors,—I'd be stung to death by their tongues, before I'd marry — you."

Pale and panting, for she had run all the way from home, Nannie, in her gray skirt and white blouse, stood swaying in the wind that blew rudely from the sea.

"Send him away, Mr. Hart," she said more quietly. "That's all I want. Don't let Father do him a harm — the scandal — men don't think. It would make everything worse. He has n't hurt *me* . . . only my reputation," added Nannie, drear-ily. "I guess I can stand that somehow. There's only one thing I can't stand,— that is his ever setting his foot in Balsam from this day on forever."

"If he ever does," interpolated Solomon Hops, grimly, "I'll kill him on the spot, and all the parsons this side of hell shan't stop me, either."

"You're hard on me, Nan," pleaded Timothy George. "Rum done it."

With one scornful white finger Nannie pointed into the night. She made no other answer.

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Timothy hung his head and cowered away. His drenched clothes, soaked from the surf in the chasm, spattered her as he passed her by. He thought how she used to worry over him if he wet his feet on a stormy night. Nannie had been very fond of him. He experienced the surprise of a low man before the incredible scorn of a high-hearted woman whom he has alienated by one fatal act of brutality. He turned like the cur he was, and crawled. The girl put her hand through her father's shaking arm and led the old man away, and no member of this singular group spoke an articulate word.

Solomon Hops might have been heard muttering: "—— him to ——" But his utterance was thick; he was drunk with anger, and staggered.

When Timothy George had slunk over the lawn by a cross-cut to the street, he felt a hand upon his shoulder. The preacher, who remembered that the Founder of his faith lived and died for the contemptible as well as for the respectable, stood high above the cringing figure.

"Nevertheless, Timothy," he said, "it is not necessary to go to perdition for this."

"Ain't it?" asked Timothy. "What place else is there?"

He stared stupidly at the minister, and turned on his heel.

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"Rum done it," he repeated monotonously.
"Rum done it."

Sterling Hart returned slowly to the chasm, and was about to cross the bridge to his own house, when Clyde dashed out of the shrubbery, barking with the ferocity of a collie who has arrived upon the scene of excitement too late to be of use.

"I had to unchain him," observed Dane, stepping up rapidly. "He would have broken his neck. What was all that noise — the cries, and the rest of it? It sounded like a fight. Were you in at the death?"

"Pretty nearly," replied Hart. He related the circumstances in a few words. "Was your wife disturbed by it?" he asked anxiously. "Did she know anything about it? I was afraid she might."

"I don't think so," returned Dane. "Excepting Clyde, of course; she must have heard Clyde — he shrieked so. I have just been down the avenue and back. Mrs. Marriot came without her horses, and she was afraid — you know how dark our avenue is. I took her to the end of it."

"Then you have n't seen Cousin Carolyn yet? You are not sure that she knows nothing of this unfortunate disturbance?"

"Why, no," said Dane. "I have n't seen her yet. I am going to her now, at once."

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"If she should inquire," suggested Mr. Hart, hesitating a little, "perhaps you will be so good as to tell her to feel no concern about the matter. It is all in my hands. I will attend to it. She is rather fond of the girl, and this will distress her. We must keep it from her for the present."

"Oh, certainly," said Dane in his light way. "It was a confounded scene. I did n't know the fellow drank to that depth."

The two men parted without further conversation. The preacher passed over the gulf that separated his home from the other. The iron bridge vibrated gently beneath his slow, restrained tread. He still walked as if he were afraid of disturbing somebody. His head fell forward on his breast. He was sick at soul, nauseated with life, and with that which is called love.

CHAPTER IX

THE collie Clyde ran the length of the avenue, nose down and sniffing anxiously. At the road he planted his feet, and stood, like the iron dogs that are set to guard old-fashioned estates. One ear pointed upwards and forwards; but the other lopped down—as a collie's ears will disagree when he is perplexed. The dog's eyes were heavy with speculation; he experienced unshared and unsharable responsibilities.

The street was almost deserted, and cracked with frost, for it was late November, and the morning bleakly cold. Far in the crisp distance, driven rapidly through the village, a solitary carriage whirled; it was drawn by a cream-white horse, and without coachman or footman; its single occupant a gentleman who looked neither to right nor left, but rode abstractedly. The collie had not arrived in season to observe whether the man, who had driven from the direction of the city, had glanced at the Sterling place as he went by. Charged by some powerful sense of canine duty, the dog began to examine the hoof marks and wheel marks of this team; nosing them thor-

oughly, and scenting the air through which they had passed. After a few moments' hesitation he began to follow them, slowly at first; then he broke into a long, loping gait, which increased as he reached the village square. One or two tradesmen who met the dog spoke to him: —

"Clyde? Why, Clyde! You're going the wrong way."

A grocer called out: "Better go home, Clyde. Your folks will be thinking you're lost."

Disdainfully disregarding these impertinences, the collie ran on. The distance between himself and the open phaeton with the solitary occupant had lessened perceptibly; he found it a mortification to admit that he could not overtake the carriage, and cantered after it with an angry anxiety. Beyond the chocolate éclair house of Solomon Hops, a road turned abruptly from the highway, skirting along the cranberry swamps of Balsam Groves, and slightly ascending as it made for the great woods, known by the name of the county — the densest, the largest, in the eastern part of the state. Towards this forest the phaeton, slowing a little as the road climbed, began to move steadily. The dog, but not rapidly, gained upon it. The road had now narrowed to a cart path, and branches of oaks and chestnuts, pines and maple, closed about the head of the rider. A wild-apple bough

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swept so low as almost to hit him in the face, and he pushed it aside with all his strength. He did not appear to have very much, and grappled with the stout branches weakly. In doing so he turned his head, and looked back down the rough way on which he had begun to climb the hill known by the country folk as Balsam Mountain. But the apple bough rebounded behind him and screened from his sight the view of a pursuing dog — a breathing, moving spot of black and tan, whose pantings, though they could neither be seen nor heard, were somehow to be inferred and felt.

The dog, however, in that critical instant, and at that baffled distance, had seen the man. It has been said that dogs, in all probability, regard the master of the household as the chief of the tribe. Clyde, who had never taken the oath of allegiance to Dr. Dane, had recognized the countenance of his chief, — the white and rigid features of Mr. Sterling. He gave a yelp of joy, and cantered up the climbing road. But the collie was not a young dog, and had run far and fast. It was a personal humiliation to admit that he could not take Balsam Mountain on the gallop, but this fact was forced upon him; he lost ground, fell back, and indeed found himself obliged to stop for his breath, drop flat on his side, and rest. By this delay he

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lost time, and the chief of the tribe disappeared from his strained and anxious sight.

Rollinstall Sterling drove on slowly. Now and then he spoke to his horse — very kindly; he was a man who loved horses — and encouraged it up the rough road. After a time he reached, as he had known that he should, the spot where wheels could climb no farther; he got out of the phaeton with the slow motions of an elderly man to whom life and limb have become objects of caution, and fastened the horse by a rope halter to a tree. After some reflection he thought better of this, and removed the tie rein, turning the team so that it faced towards the bottom of the hill, and standing it carefully on such level as he could find. The woods were sprinkled with small stones, mouthfuls bitten from the granite of the Cape, and he stooped and placed some of these under the wheels, so that the weight should not come too heavily upon the animal in its constrained position.

The spot where the team had halted was a clearing, and gave an open outlook upon the meadows. In fact, an important object in the clearing could be seen from certain points below, and Solomon Hops, conducting a surveyor over his most hopeful cranberry lot, made a telescope of his hands, peered through it, and said: —

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"Looks like Death 'n' the pale horse up yonder."

When Mr. Sterling had removed the tie rein, he replaced it by a bit of light cord or stout string. The pale horse was a cribber, and if occasion called, could gnaw the string, and would. The master patted the horse, and turned away up the "Mountain." When he had climbed a short distance, he returned and blanketed the animal tenderly.

The man climbed on: quickly at first, then he began to lag; his breath shortened, and he sat down. He was in the heart of the forest and on the height of the hill. The woods closed in around him solemnly. Their dampness struck to his aging blood, and he felt very cold. He shivered, and buttoned his overcoat to his thin throat. Suddenly it occurred to him that before very long he should be colder.

His hand crept to his breast pocket, and withdrew a small object, which he laid upon the moss at his side. It was red-cup moss, and he noticed the tiny tapers of color that burned and broke where they were crushed. An acorn fell from somewhere with a soft thud, and a squirrel scampered after it. The squirrel stopped, and regarded the man, who saw that the little creature's heart beat wildly.

"A bird shot would stop it," he thought. "How little it takes!"

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After a while he said aloud:—

“What’s the use of waiting?” His shaking hand stole to the thing upon the red-cupped moss, picked it up, and laid it down.

“I don’t know that there’s any hurry about it, after all,” he thought. He took out his pencil and pocket memorandum, and began to cast up some accounts. This absorbed him for a time—probably a very short one, but he could not have told. He put the book and pencil down presently, and sat staring at the underbrush. The forest was heavy at that point, and pressed upon him, as if it had pursued and surrounded him. He could not see the sky, and on reflection was glad that he could not. The muscles of his frozen face stiffened; he looked straight before him; a little snake crawled from somewhere and slid away, watching him with cold and narrow eyes; he did not observe the snake. His head fell upon his breast, and then into his hands.

No one could hear—oh, no one could hear him, and the man began to sob. As he sobbed, he groaned. All the signs of suffering that civilization teaches us to repress fought their way to the surface of him, in the savage solitude of uncompanied Nature. Terrible sounds, such as the deepest human tenderness never witnesses from any man of us—sounds which friend nor wife

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nor daughter may ever hear—confided themselves to the silence of the forest. This escape of emotion is the refuge of those whose life is broken at the roots; it is the last right of the despairing, as it was the first instinct of the wailing infant. Rollinstall Sterling wept with the freedom of a child and the anguish of a disgraced and aging man.

He was so absorbed in his misery that he had not heard the crackling of the moss and twigs; and when a soft, wet tongue lapped his hand, he started with superstitious terror, cried out, and sprang.

The motion knocked the pistol, which lay at full cock; it went off, and the woods rang and reverberated with the shot.

At the report the collie leaped in fright, and cuddled against his master like a lap dog. Mr. Sterling stroked him kindly.

“Never mind it, Clyde! There are four cartridges left. But I won’t bother you with them. You can go back the way you came. Clyde! Go home, sir. I do not want you, Clyde. Go *home*, I say.”

The collie wagged his tail pleasantly, but did not move.

“Go home!” repeated the master. “Go home to your mistress. There is nothing that you can do

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for me; kisses won't help me now. I never was very fond of dogs' kisses. You know she taught you not to bother me. Go home, Clyde!"

Clyde had always obeyed Mr. Sterling, of whom he stood in considerable awe; but this time he refused outright. Into the animal's beautiful eyes a strange entreaty leaped. He put his paws about the old man's neck, and delicately began to lap his ear.

Mr. Sterling stared at him, trembling. He thought: "I never can do it with the dog looking on. I must get rid of him somehow." He gave the creature a rough push. Clyde answered it with grieved reproach, but he did not stir. After a few moments he crawled up, and with the timidity of a rebuffed collie licked the master's hand again. Neither the man nor the dog spoke, and this pantomime of advance and repulse continued for some moments. Then Mr. Sterling, with his natural stateliness, began to argue with the dog.

"You don't understand, sir. You have mistaken my meaning, sir. I don't *want* you, Clyde. Go home, I say!"

The dog crept up and laid his head in the collie fashion, in perfect silence, on his master's knee. He had the appearance of having come there to stay. He was a heavy dog, and it was difficult to move him. After some thought Mr. Sterling tore

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a leaf from his note-book, hunted for his pencil, and wrote :—

TO the REVEREND STERLING HART,
Balsam Groves.

DEAR STERLING,— I sent you a letter from town by private hand. My man will bring it out, but it would not reach you till noon. Clyde has followed me, God knows how. I cannot get rid of him any other way, and I am sending him down with this. In view of possible accident to the note, I cannot explain myself further. You will find my white mare in the clearing halfway up Balsam Mountain. Please see that she is given a good supper, if you find her before dark. My letter will give you full particulars.

Yours,

ROLLINSTALL STERLING.

He took an old envelope from his pocket, read-dressed and resealed it, and showed it to the dog, who sniffed at it slowly and intelligently.

“Clyde, go home. Go home with this letter. Don't take it to your mistress. Take it to Mr. Hart. Understand, Clyde! Not mistress, but Mr. Hart. Don't stay here any longer. Don't stop with the horse. The horse does n't want you. I don't want you, sir. Go *home*, sir. Carry the letter home—to Mr. Hart.”

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These words, articulated very slowly and distinctly, were repeated two or three times. The collie listened to them, at first with one ear up and the other down; but presently both shot upwards and forwards, and comprehension fell on every feature of his alert and handsome face. He seized the note and trotted off. After he had gone a few steps he returned, dropped the paper, and humbly kissed the old man's trembling hands. Then his jaws closed upon the letter with a snap that the most celebrated fighters in Balsam could not have loosened, and he shot down the cart path at a gait which rapidly took him out of Mr. Sterling's sadly pursuing eyes. The white mare, tethered by her piece of twine, whinnied as the collie cantered by. But Clyde, though he recognized the salutation by a civil swish of the tail, did not stop. He took the descent of Balsam Mountain mightily, with tremendous strides and leaps. Two or three times, to get his breath, he had to drop the letter, but he put a paw upon it, bit it up again, and bounded on.

In the village no one happened to observe him, and the collie made his way through the square, undisturbed and undiverted from his purpose. This took him doggedly homewards. At the avenue of the Sterling place he seemed confused, paused, and looked about with a troubled air.

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After some hesitation, he walked up the avenue perplexedly, glancing towards the house where the dearest mistress in the world with the newest and the most objectionable baby was sitting on the sunniest piazza in a windless corner that looked upon the sea.

Halfway up the avenue the dog turned abruptly and made a cross-cut towards the iron bridge. Over this, as chance decreed, Mr. Hart was walking slowly. The collie, who was now a good deal exhausted, weakly dropped the note at the preacher's feet: it fell short, and blew over the ravine.

As luck and the winds would have it, the paper lodged on the shelving strip of rock where Timothy George had hung and clung for his life. A strong railing had been set there. Mr. Hart, being poignantly familiar with the topography of the spot, flung himself on the ground, stretched his hand beneath the railing, reached over, and quietly possessed himself of the letter.

Rollinstall Sterling sat with his chin in his hands. His eyes looked into the woods, but saw nothing. The great perspective of the forest seemed to have melted from him, and only a little foreground of dead leaves and bare thicket remained. He shivered with the cold, and now that the collie had gone, he felt unendurably lonely. He was

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not a dog lover, and had never been deeply attached to Clyde, who seemed to him like a retainer, loyal and worthy, and to be treated accordingly. But despair, which snatches at every trifling assuagement, had its way with him, and the fact was that Mr. Sterling was pathetically touched by the dog's appreciation.

"After all," he thought, "Clyde respects me." He added, "And trusts me."

This deference, this confidence, taking the last form which life could now offer him, moved him more than he would have thought possible. It could not be denied that for a long time, or for what seemed to him a long time, the incident of Clyde's appearance and departure affected the old man profoundly. It might also be said that it led him to reconsider his purpose.

He picked up his memorandum book, that still lay on the moss beside the pistol, and began to cast up accounts again. He did this rapidly and mechanically, as if the sum were too familiar to deserve attention; and with a groan he pushed the book back into his breast pocket.

He thought— What did he think? What does a man think who has lived a long and honored life, and finds or seeks at the end of it a dishonored death? This one bore an eminent mercantile name, one of the oldest, one of the most enviable

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in the state. Wealth, ease, luxury,—these had been accepted as matters of course, and with the instinct of his good blood he had never overvalued them. Position he had valued, and all that goes with it,—the deference, the confidence, and the honor of men; these he had possessed.

In the financial world his credit rung gold true; his opinions were sought; his advice was followed; his views of affairs were rated as driven men still in the trampling stampede rate the wisdom of a superior who has withdrawn himself in an honored age from the scramble of youth and the march of middle life. It was a matter of course that he should be the trustee of a dozen estates.

Above the mere material advantages of a rich man's career Rollinstall Sterling had estimated—no, let us say that he supposed himself to have estimated—the plain, spiritual blessing of character; the possession of unquestionable integrity; the pride of an irreproachable name.

Was it this very assurance, in a measure, that had led him to trifle with it? So confident of himself, so confident of the confidence of others, had he leaned too heavily upon his spotless reputation, till the weakened bridge broke beneath him? Probably he himself would have been the last to be able to identify the tortuous road by which he had traveled. It may take years to ruin a life; but

the ruin of a soul lies in the first deliberate, dishonorable choice — the choice that is confused perhaps with the higher motive, or discolored by some self-delusion so adroit that the nature of the deed escapes the careless perception. To retrieve dishonor is more possible and less rare for the rude than for the cultivated man.

There is no physical malady so difficult of disguise as moral disorder ; and none so hard to heal. The incurable diseases are yielding, one by one, to science. The fatal illnesses of the soul remain half studied and still unconquered.

Rollinstall Sterling, shivering on Balsam Mountain, thought less of the wrong that he had done than of the opinions people would form of him for having done it ; this, at least, was the way his mind worked at first. The blot upon his reputation seemed to be more important than the blackness of his soul. It was as if his life were a kinetoscope, whose plates slid before him rapidly ; he sat like a spectator who has paid a price — an awful price — to see the show. Curiously irrelevant memories, selected by who knew what power, forced themselves upon his consciousness. He saw himself at the directors’ meeting, where they had elected him president of his bank — his first position of the sort. He heard the language of the vote which had been cast in his honor. He re-

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membered the carved cupids on the private dining-room in the hotel where he had lunched with his most intimate magnate that day. He could recall the menu down which he went as far as broiled live lobster, and that his friend, who was an officer in the humane societies, commented on it.

He saw himself in his office benignantly heading subscriptions — all the conservative and important ones ; everything came to him first.

He was at Washington leading a delegation that represented the distinguished merchants of New England, that carried to Congress a measure upon which the eyes of the country were fixed. The Ways and Means Committee listened to him with deference. The President, in a private interview, talked half an hour about their university, and then casually remarked : “ By the way, I don’t anticipate that you will have any difficulty with your bill — so long as *you* are behind it.”

When he came home, a committee of students were at his house. They asked the privilege of arranging a day for the lecture which he had promised them on Mercantile Honor. When he gave the lecture the old hall was packed ; he knew the intoxication of public address, so seldom experienced by a man of affairs. He was a favorite in the university, to which he had been a generous

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donor, and of which he was in a commercial sense the most eminent alumnus.

As his mind fled back it occurred to him how little criticism he had met from his fellow men, how little they had hindered, how much they had helped him. He had been honored by the honorable. He had been trusted by the trustworthy.

But this was not the most or the worst of it. He had been loved — ah! how had he been loved! — by the beloved. There never was such a daughter. How could there be? Who else had Carolyn's thrilling affectional sentience? Her motherless soul had opened before him like a flower too exquisite to be touched. He had breathed it, and had broken it; yet *he* knew that she would forgive him that. Whoever derided, she would comfort. Whoever scorned, she would defend. He thought that if he could have fled with her to some of those ideal and impossible shores of which disgraced men dream, he might have got some sort of foothold and climbed a little way up the moral precipice down which he had dropped.

But Carolyn had her husband; and her child.

By the great natural road that broadens between father and daughter she had escaped him. The desolate world had no occupant for the dishonored man.

Upon the inevitable outcome of his situation

—if he lived—he did not, for he would not, dwell. He persuaded himself that this would be worse for her than the other way. He had become an adept in self-persuasion. Long ago, more years than he could recall now, he had recorded upon the chart of his moral disease the wavering temperature line on the other side of which a man loses the power of being honest with himself. Now, in the hour of his last moral conflict, delusion after delusion chased him. He found it as difficult to feel truly as he did to think clearly. As his mind darkened and his will weakened, one thing alone remained distinct to him — his daughter's face. It assumed the movement of slow and solemn regression: at first he saw it just as she was, sitting in his wind chair on the piazza towards the sea — the new motherhood of her, all Madonna, with the baby on her lap. Then she slipped back a little, and he saw the bride of her, the rapture — she was all new wife. What could be more “mystic, wonderful”? Nothing but the unwon girl. . . . How exquisite!

She came and sat upon the arm of his chair, in her white dress, with her velvet hands, her two long braids of bright hair. She laid her cheek to his: “Blue to-night, Papa?” she said. “What ails you, dear? Don't you want a kiss?”

While he was arguing with his anguish, and

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wondering what reply he could make to her, — not daring to touch her, being unworthy, — behold, he held in his arms a child. She was quite a little girl. She was crying, and he comforted her. Then she laughed, and he kissed her — yes, he was fit to kiss her *then*. She put up a little mouth, like an apple blossom, and began to cuddle to him, and to call him “Dee Papa! My dee Papa!”

“Carolyn!” he cried. “*Carolyn!*”

It was mid-afternoon when Sterling Hart came into the house and asked once more for Dr. Dane, who had been out all day. Carolyn told him so. She was crossing the hall, and he could not escape her: nor the hard duty which it seemed must fall on him, as everything else (concerning her) that was not easy had fallen. He had always been the one to stand between her and the cruel edges of life. He had hoped that her husband might have spared him this.

“Chanceford is out on some consultation or long case,” said Mrs. Dane. “He has one of his busy days. I expect him home about— Cousin Sterling!” she put her hand to her heart slowly. “Something has happened. . . . It is my father,” she added. She sank back and sat down on the stairs. “Was it his heart?” she asked very quietly.

“Yes, thank God!” said Sterling Hart. His

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passionate gratitude that he could say this and tell the truth—for he himself, climbing Balsam Mountain with Solomon, had found the pistol lying on the moss beside the unwounded dead—exalted him so that he was hardly conscious of the effect of his words and manner upon her. “He did not suffer—that is, it must have been a matter of a moment—what is called an instant death.”

“You are not telling me the whole.” Cara lifted her white face; it was strong with the courage before calamity which surprises us in the tenderest women. “You are keeping something back.”

He kept it back as long as he could; for she did not urge him till he chose. The rest of the tragic story came to her knowledge soon enough. But this one thing the preacher restrained from her till it was not possible to do so any longer. Even then he had to be the one to tell her. Her husband said he could not do it. Dane hated the unpleasant, and avoided it when he might.

In the ruin of her father’s honor Carolyn’s private fortune—with his own, with others not his own—had gone the way of the speculator who plunges that he may swim, and at the moment when he least anticipates it, sinks beyond rescue. The weight of the transparent and pliable seas, heavier than the opaque and immovable mountains, holds him down.

CHAPTER X

THE blind flapped in the storm, and Mrs. Dane left her seat by the window and went out on the piazza. The catch proved to be broken, and she hunted up nails, hammer, and hatchet and tried to effect some amateur repairs. She did this with the patience of one who had been accustomed to all sorts and conditions of household drudgery and to the expedients of poverty for a much longer time than, in fact, she had known anything about them. It was but a year since the death of her father, whose beautiful homestead, claimed by wronged and restless creditors, had been promptly bought in by his kinsman, Sterling Hart, and eagerly offered to the homeless daughter.

"Honor me by occupying it, Cousin Carolyn," he had urged. "Please me, and stay."

But Carolyn had not stayed. She and her husband were agreed, at least, on that. The preacher was not a rich man, and no rent which Dr. Dane's uncertain income would permit could decently be offered for one of the great houses of the East Shore. After one hard winter in the readjusted conditions of her old home—stripped of

its servants, and terrified by its fuel bills — Mrs. Dane and her husband and child had moved across the road into the little white house known as the nasturtium cottage. There, Cara had resumed the struggles of a life whose outward deprivations had gradually come to her to seem the least and lightest of her perplexities.

Once, in the blush of her betrothal, she had said to Chanceford Dane, "I could starve." This, in fact, she would have been capable of doing. She would have died for him without a groan; suffered for him without an outcry. She had loved him so much that neither dying nor suffering counted very much to her. She had believed him worth anything that he might cost her in the essence and value of a woman's life. There were no pangs of body or spirit which for his sake she would have refused. Neither variety nor monotony of endurance could have vanquished her so long as she endured for him. Cara possessed in a degree unknown to most women the love genius. She had, like other endowed souls, to pay the price of her gift.

This, in a measure, she was beginning to estimate, but with the merciful vagueness which marks the first stage of a woman's disillusion. In a way her exquisite sensitiveness might be said to have been her protection as well as her betrayal. It

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intervened between her lot and her consciousness for a longer time than it could have done had she been a ruder or a colder woman. It delayed her inexorable fate, because it delayed her acknowledgment of it to herself. She found it incredible to suppose—therefore impossible to admit—that her idol had neither deserved nor valued the sacrifice of her sweet nature to her ideal of himself; or, indeed, to her ideal of his affection for her.

She had not offered him a niche, but an altar. To suggest to herself that she had misdeified the man she loved was to overthrow the religion of the system of things. She approached the knowledge of the truth with the slowness which usually precedes an abrupt and startling revelation.

Dane had met the loss of their property with the irritability of a pleasure-loving man whose early experience of hardship had acquainted him with the nature and meaning of poverty. His brief draught of luxury had not made it easier, but harder, for him to reassume the petty economies of a narrow income. Of the two, Carolyn, who had never known an ungratified wish, bore their fallen fortunes with more cheerfulness and far more poise. Dane had learned too well the fatal art of spending freely. His struggling practice did not meet his needs. He ran up bills which he could not pay, and swore because he could not. The

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first time that he swore at her, his wife received the outburst with the dumb astonishment of a doe who has seen its first hunter and met its first wound. She accepted her husband's apology in trembling silence, but whether she remembered or forgot the shock of that shot, he never knew. The circumstance eluded her expression as something too coarse for it. She puzzled Dane. Her reserve annoyed him. The very exquisiteness of her, which had charmed him at the first, began to irritate him. The rudeness of his early life returned upon him now and then like an old dye that one supposes washed out. He became what we call in family phraseology "difficult." It was not until the evening of which we speak that it occurred to Mrs. Dane that he could be anything more.

She had been watching for him at the front windows of their living-room; patiently, as doctors' wives do, and without the anxiety of other women for the fate of delaying husbands.

There was no fire on the black hearth, — a luxury not to be thought of when the little furnace was started, — and she had pushed the small couch, reserved for the baby's use, near the register, for the night was cold. The child was asleep. It was a healthy, happy baby, not too sensitive, as the mother perceived with a curious mingling of

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regret and satisfaction. Above the white woolen afghan which covered the little relaxed figure the child's moist hair shone on its forehead. Joyce had his father's hair and eyes. Where would the inheritance stop? Mrs. Dane had begun to wonder, not without anxiety. Blessed is the mother who can say: "God grant that my boy repeat his father, soul and body!"

Carolyn, in her mourning dress, sat by the streaming window with both hands pressed to the sides of her eyes that she might peer out into the street. While she did so, the blind, rebellious to her feminine carpentry, slammed again in her face and cracked the glass. She ran out once more upon the wet piazza. While she stood struggling in the wind and splashed by the rain, trying to take the blind from its hinges, she saw that her husband was driving slowly up the avenue to the stable. It was a noisy storm, and she had not heard wheels or hoofs; but the horse (it was her father's) was white, and she perceived the dull gleam of him, and that he had unexpectedly stopped.

"Drive right on, Chanceford," she called. "It's only the blind. I can attend to it myself. Dinner is all ready for you."

Dane made no reply, and the horse whinnied anxiously.

"Clyde?" she called. "Clyde? Where are *you*?"

But the dog was not there. Slightly startled, Carolyn ran out into the storm, and down the terrace, against which the horse had driven one wheel of the buggy. This, obstructed by a bush, had stuck in the soaked grass. The buggy, which a less conscientious horse would have overturned, was empty.

Mrs. Dane clambered over the wheel and drove on to the stable. Her first impulse to drive in search of her husband had given place to a cold and sickening prudence. Without exactly knowing why, she thought she had better not assume that there had been an accident — not yet; not too soon.

She ran into the house for her raincoat, came out again, went a little way down the sidewalk, and scrutinized the storm-beaten road. It was quite deserted. She walked on hurriedly, going faster and further than she knew, until she came to the chocolate éclair house, where Nannie was lighting the gas and drawing the shades. At this point Mrs. Dane turned about and came back. She now remembered that Solomon Hops had one of his personally conducted rheumatic attacks. These were more strenuous than dangerous, and she felt sure that the doctor had made this call the last on his rounds on his way home. Whatever had happened, horse and driver had separated somewhere be-

tween the two houses. Now, she reasoned (more calmly than most young wives would), the chances were that her husband would be at home before her. Her steps quickened to a run. When she came opposite the Sterling place, her old home, her dog leaped out upon her; whining and barking, he urged her across the street. Against one of the great stone pillars which guarded the entrance to the avenue, the figure of a man leaned heavily; his crushed felt hat slouched over his face, and his head fell forward upon his breast. Clyde put his fore paws dutifully, rather than affectionately, about the man's waist, and seemed to make something like an effort to support him, until Mrs. Dane had reached the spot.

"Oh, are you hurt?" she cried. Her wet hand slid into her husband's. He pushed it off.

"Where is that horse?" he snarled. "He dragged his weight and came home without me. My foot caught in the reins somehow, and I had a nasty tumble. Solomon will talk about his symptoms all night. Only way I can stop him is to put a thermometer in his mouth. What are you here for, anyhow? Pity there was n't an accident. It would have given you something to fuss about."

Carolyn made no answer. She helped him up the steps and into the cottage hall, where he stood with sodden and evading eyes. She took off his wet coat

and led him into his office. Neither spoke, and he sank down heavily into the office chair.

"I will bring you a cup of coffee," she said, struggling for composure; but her voice shook. It took a little time to make the coffee, and the Irish maid of all work fretted about it all the while. When Mrs. Dane came back to the office she found the doctor stretched on the lounge, past speech or motion, as unconscious of her presence as he was of his disgrace. In all her sheltered life Carolyn had never been so near a drunken man. She bent over him and touched his reddened cheek with her light, white fingers.

"Dear," she said, "are you sick? Oh, what can I do for you? Chanceford! Chanceford!"

At this moment the child across the hall waked and began to laugh, and then to call: "Mum — mumma? Pup — puppa? Puppa?"

Carolyn stood for a moment irresolute, and then she turned away and shut the office door. She took the baby, and sat down with him beside the cheerless register, and stared at the window where the storm was raging. Beyond the anger of the rain and wind she could hear the sea upon the cliff — the old familiar, mighty roar, mastering every lesser sound, as the great master the little sorrows of life. For one wild moment it seemed to her that if she wrapped the baby up quite well, and ran out with

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him, and kissed him once or twice, and slipped off into the chasm with him quietly, it would be the kindest deed that she could do, or dream of doing, by his father's son. But she was a sane woman, and she sat still by the register, and laid her cheek upon the baby's curls. One great, dry sob tore up from some unexplored capacity of anguish within her, but she did not cry. Clyde came up and kissed her, but she did not notice Clyde. The child bubbled on: "Mum — mumma? Pup — puppa? Puppa?"

Dane's was one of the natures which harden when they should melt, perhaps thaw when they should solidify. The consciousness of error did not make him tender. The fact that he had debased himself in the presence of his wife irritated him. His Southern pride flared in him, and he omitted to express to her his more or less genuine regret for what had occurred. He found it hard to forgive her for having been a witness of his weakness. In itself considered, he would have readily told her that he had taken a cup of afternoon tea with Mrs. Marriot — if he had stopped with the tea. He felt unwilling to complicate one actual fault with the appearance of another in Cara's mind. He took the refuge of the weak nature, or of the weak element in a stronger nature, and as-

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sumed a wounded air. His injured silence distanced his wife more utterly than any speech or language could have done — as he had known that it would. Cara, who had rehearsed over and again with herself the difficult scene in which she should try — how carefully! how tenderly! — to say the right thing, the gentle thing, the wifely one, that which would forgive without humiliating, and stimulate without reproaching, found herself thrown back upon the fact that there was to be no scene at all. It was scarcely a matter of weeks before she perceived that this grave episode in their mutual life was not to be material of discussion between them. The subject dropped like a blazing coal, and scorched the ground on which they stood. The smoke of its burning came up and enveloped her in a smothering sensation — half astonishment and half a stifling doubt of her own judgment. It seemed to her that she ought to have been able to find some way of helping Chanceford; it did not occur to her to rebuke him. But she found no way. He held her at the arm's length of his temperament. His injured manner gradually gave way to his light one — debonair, and smiling, as if nothing of consequence had happened. The husband and wife began to tread the diverging paths between which an important moral question has protruded. Carolyn had reached the

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point in a wife's experience where, whatever she says, or omits to say, upon a sore subject, she is conscious of giving offense. She longed inexpressibly for some sort of supporting counsel, but the dignity of her soul refused to seek it of any other mind or heart. She found herself locked back upon herself, passionately praying for guidance which only Heaven could give, and in which Heaven seemed to take no visible interest at all. She sought the greatest, the supremely precious good of human experience—the direction of duty.

It took her some time to understand that this is not to be had for the wishing; if it replies to that uplifted concentration of the spirit which we call prayer, who but the devout shall know?

Carolyn soon gave up trying to learn what she ought to do for Chanceford, and simply did the things she knew she could do. Sometimes he seemed to feel sorry for her. Sometimes he was kind. At first he did not repeat his fault. But by midwinter he was drinking heavily. His practice began to suffer, and his temper with it.

It has been said by those who are experts in the subject, that the wife of a drinking man always carries in her countenance the evidence of her lot. Cara's beautiful face assumed pathetic metamorphoses, passing from stage to stage of the fate

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which drives the sensitiveness in and draws the hardness out. So gentle was her fibre, so ineffable the tenderness of her instincts, that she could not harden; she could only sadden. She developed a patient philosophy.

"The world is full of women," she thought. "They all endure the lives which men inflict. Many of them must suffer as much as I do; some of them must suffer more. I suppose I can bear my share."

Once or twice she pleaded with her husband. She never reproached him. But neither her expression nor her reserve appeared to touch him. She had reached the world-old crisis where a woman to whom a man has given his wildest worship, his most passionate allegiance, learns that her influence upon him has retreated from the foreground of his consciousness.

This shock to the heart is as common as the marriage bond; women are apt to forget that it means a mutual misery in which a man must share in a man's way. She, by reason of her sex, will suffer more; but he, if only because he suffers less, will be the more perplexed.

Dane had passed the point of perplexity, and arrived by rapid bounds at that of conscious error. He drank all winter, and the spring found him a tempted, yielding, and a half-ruined man.

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Mrs. Douce Marriot always arrived in Balsam Groves upon the first of May; in this particular she was no better nor worse than other taxpayers. For weeks her elaborate place had been in the hands of its gardeners and spring cleaners, and upon the afternoon of the thirtieth of April she slid from her town house to her shore house as easily as she put her head under the imported carriage dress which her maid held over her perfectly adjusted coiffure. In fact, Mrs. Marriot drove out from the city, — the day was so gentle, and the horses must be got over the road, — and her husband, making one of his rare public appearances in her society, sat and smoked the ride out beside her. He was a heavy, silent man, capable of keeping his own counsel, and that of his wife, for whom, in a sense, he cherished an attachment; he made it a point not to believe the things he heard about her, and it was certain that he had never heard the most objectionable. Her manner towards him was perfect; she entertained, if she had ceased to charm him; they passed a pleasant evening together in the great blue room of their summer home, and the next day he kissed her good-by and sailed for somewhere, to return at midsummer. He would cable frequently; he found it "so much cheaper than writing."

"Douce," he hesitated, with his foot on the step

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of the trap, when she drove to the station, "if I were you, I'd go slow with that fellow — you know — old Sterling's daughter married him. He is n't in it, exactly; he does n't trot in your harness; he might take you too seriously — men who have married above their station are dull about those things, and the wife — *she* is —" He broke off, biting his cigar. "You'll pardon me, I'm sure, Douce?"

"Why, of course, Harry," replied Mrs. Marriot, amiably. "And thank you, besides. You know I'm always glad of your advice."

"Take it or leave it!" called the husband, laughing, as he swung aboard the train. "Only don't say I did n't give it."

Mrs. Marriot kissed her gloved hand to him through her dotted lace veil, and sat soberly watching the train until it had become a speck upon the track. A certain sentimentality overtook her, and she put her handkerchief to her eyes. It occurred to her that she was very fond of Harry. She drove home slowly, and, feeling the need of diversion from the circumstance that her husband had gone abroad without her, sat down and wrote several notes. One of these went to a college boy, inviting him to dine; one to an artist, with whom she had appointments for a portrait; a third to a politician, with whom she had decided not to take

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an automobile ride; a fourth acquainted the village doctor with the fact of her return to Balsam, and besought his attention to her "picturesque neuralgia," which, it seemed, no physician in town had shown any capacity whatever for comprehending or treating.

It was not more than a few days after Mrs. Marriot had taken up her legal residence in Balsam Groves that Mrs. Dane received a peremptory summons for the doctor from the case of Solomon Hops, who, it appeared, had undergone what Nannie, sobbing at the telephone, described as "some sort of a fit or stroke."

The doctor's wife (as doctors' wives do in serious cases) made eager and sympathetic efforts to notify her husband, trying to reach him by wire wherever she might have a chance of overtaking him; in fact, searching the neighborhood, before she remembered having heard him say that Mrs. Marriot had returned, and her neuralgia with her. But Mrs. Marriot's telephone, it seemed, was not yet connected for the season, and Mrs. Dane did the only other thing that suggested itself. She tossed on her long coat, called the little Irish maid to the baby, and herself ran over to give the summons of Solomon's emergency.

It was almost twilight, but not quite, and the sea, as she hurried up the avenue, called to her

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with the change of tone which she had always fancied it assumed at the coming on of night — as if it dropped from the major to the minor key. The doctor's buggy stood just outside the stables; a glance told her that. Her mind was quite occupied with Nannie and Solomon, and she rang Mrs. Marriot's bell abstractedly.

"Call the doctor," she began. "There is a very sick patient."

Yes, madam. The doctor was in the library with Mrs. Marriot. Would Mrs. Dane please step in? The butler waved a stately hand towards the blue room.

"I will turn on the light," he suggested.

"Oh, don't wait for that! Don't wait for anything!" cried Mrs. Dane. "It is a *very* sick patient. Only say that to the doctor, and mention that I am here."

She stepped into the blue room hurriedly, and sat down on the first chair she saw. She had a light step, and had, in fact, run over in her slippers. The Wilton carpet received her foot without a sound. Within the large, high, darkly decorated room the twilight had settled heavily. She accustomed her eyes to the obstruction by degrees, and it was — how long? The respite of a moment? — before she became aware of the presence of others in the room. Two figures, blurred against a shad-

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owy sofa, sat unconscious of her. She looked, and got to her feet. Her first impulse was to flee; but her second thought and second observation told her that it was too late, for the returning steps of the butler, padded in his felt slippers, sounded across the marble of the hall.

The doctor and the patient had now advanced to meet the wife. In her long coat Carolyn looked taller than she was; she stood quite still, and silent.

The servant saved the situation, as the servant so often does. He slid from bulb to bulb, and the electricity shot all over the great room. The blue velvet papering on the high walls scowled at the light; a satin chair somewhere received it more cordially, and glittered with it. Mrs. Dane fixed her eyes upon the satin chair. She did not glance at her husband. She found herself talking about Solomon Hops; telling how ill he was, and what Nannie said; and then she turned. In the doorway she looked back.

Across the long, elaborate room she saw the two standing and staring. Mrs. Marriot's experienced face had crimsoned, but Dane was blazing white. He held his head haughtily. He seemed to fling at his wife the spirit of some challenge or some defense.

"It is not personally conducted rheumatism

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this time," said Carolyn, quite as if nothing had happened. "Solomon is very ill. I tried everywhere to find you. The telephone was not connected."

As if *she* were the one of those three who should explain, who should apologize, she found herself uttering these futile words. But she did not utter any more. When Dane came out to the buggy his wife was not to be seen.

"This is most unfortunate!" sighed Mrs. Marriot, swaying on the piazza in her pale blue gown; the dress was spangled here and there, and glittered before Dane dizzily. He smote her with one fierce frown. At that moment he could have struck Douce Marriot to the ground. He was seized with moral nausea; of her, of himself, of the chance which had brought about this fatality. He leaped over the wheel, and lashed the white horse down the avenue.

It was late when Dane came home. He observed that Cara did not come to meet him at the door, as she was in the habit of doing, but this he had expected. He took off his coat slowly, and went into his office with hesitating feet. The room was empty, and the house was still. After some delay he crossed the hall with evident reluctance, and wavered on the threshold of the living-room

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where his wife was sitting, with their sleeping child.

She rose as he entered, and both stood regarding each other with the consciousness that the irremediable had happened. Dane had a defiant look. But Cara's face pleaded even then — with him, with fate, with the shock under which every nerve of her soul and body shook. She was gray white, and ghastly — but gentle; *how* gentle, how womanlike, how piteous to see, he could not refuse to acknowledge to himself.

"Well?" he began, in a tone which his wife had long since learned to recognize as one with which it was impossible for her to deal.

"Have you anything to say?" Carolyn uttered the words with a quietness which astonished herself more than it did him.

Dane tossed back his handsome head. "No. Not to any question put in that way. No. I don't say I might not have; but under the circumstances — no. I am evidently prejudged. What would be the use?"

"Very well," said Cara. She tottered, and sank back into her chair beside the child. "I must — think. I do not know — what — to do." She passed her hand confusedly over her eyes.

"If a man's wife can't trust him, — if she must come spying upon him, — that's reason enough.

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I decline to offer any excuses — at present. It depends upon circumstances when or whether I explain the situation upon which you so unwarrantably intruded. I say, a man's wife should trust him — ”

“Against the evidence of her own senses?” asked Carolyn. A slow, contemptuous curve turned her delicate lip. She could not help it, and she did not know it.

“Against *any* evidence!” thundered Dane. “Until she has heard what he has to say.”

“If there were anything to be said — ” returned Cara, drearily.

“That is for me to judge,” replied Dane. This preposterous answer took away her breath, and she sat panting and mute before him.

On his tempestuous face shame and sorrow warred with something like compassion for her, but he gave no expression to either. He turned on his heel, and made as if to leave the room, but lingered.

“Can I have anything to eat?” he asked, as if nothing had happened.

“Maggie will wait on you,” replied Cara. Her chin quivered, but her voice was quite firm.

“Very well,” he said in his turn. He went out to the dining-room, and rang for his belated meal. Cara did not join him. No further words passed

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between them, and when he went upstairs her door was locked.

As it had been with that other offense, Cara found herself completely disabled in the moral conflict by the offender. Dane assumed his injured air; and his wife, torn between her sweet impulse to be more than generous to him and her scathing consciousness that there are things which a wife must not overlook because that is the easiest way to live, fell back upon a tentative and terrible silence. No virago's tongue could have scourged Dane as this spiritual dignity did. He felt humiliated by the very sight of her, — and Dane never could bear to be made uncomfortable. Cara attended to his wants politely. But upon the frozen misery of her face he dared not dwell. They stood upon the opposite sides of a glacier whose stealthy current she could not cross, and he would not, if indeed he could. Their daily life took on the hopeless character which marriage alone, of all human relations, may acquire.

Already they seemed to themselves to have been separated for a longer time than they had been united. Dane's frowning face darkened day by day, and one morning he hurled himself out of the house and aboard the first train to the city. He returned in the late May twilight, and she heard

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his step ring through the hall. He called her imperiously.

"Cara? Cara! I wish to see you—at once, please."

She was putting the baby to bed, but she obeyed immediately. Dane beckoned her into the office, and shut the door.

"I may as well tell you what has happened," he began.

"If it is anything worse—" she pleaded. But she thought: "What could be worse?" Then her heart fused within her, and she cried out:—

"Chanceford! Chanceford! We *did* love each other! I don't want to make a mistake. I'm not a hard woman. I could forgive . . . anything I ought to. Oh, I did love you! I did love you! If you only had *one* word to say to me!"

"I have three," replied Dane, stolidly. He put both hands on her shoulders—would he have held her off, or drawn her towards him? She could not tell; perhaps he did not know himself. He looked straight into her piteous eyes, and with great distinctness and deliberation said:—

"I have enlisted."

Her face dropped against her hands upon the office table. The light from above selected her soft, brown hair and the contour of her womanly head.

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Dane felt as if these outlines were being etched upon his brain with a burning graver.

“I have enlisted as a private,” he said, “in this accursed war.”

CHAPTER XI

No one who lived through the American Civil War could face the spring of 1898 without a grip at the heart such as the present generation cannot understand. But between the novice and the expert in suffering there may not, after all, be much to choose when we come to that; and the woman who had never before searched the lists of "Killed, Wounded, Missing" for a name she dared not see, had — what advantage over her who was gray with the memory of a fading pain? Women, who are the worst victims of war, whichever way we look at it, rapidly acquire its terrible lessons; and Carolyn in six weeks came to feel as if she had been widowed sixty years by the blunders and brutalities of the governing sex.

From the first she had no delusions as to the outcome for herself of this latest and saddest of our national errors.

When her husband kissed her good-by — for he did kiss her — she thought quite clearly: "I shall never see him again."

Few words had passed between them. As if he

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had not offended or inflicted, and as if she had not endured the consciousness of perplexed duty which is so much harder than simple, clear-sighted misery, they set about their hurried preparations for his departure to the front. To the last moment she hoped that he would do or would say something to ease the intolerable situation under which they parted. But Dane did nothing of the kind. It occurred to her that there was probably nothing that he could do or say to blunt the edge of the facts; and yet she was never quite sure of that. Like thousands of women before her, Carolyn cried out upon her fate to make it possible for her to treat the man who had wronged her as if he had not done it.

“There must be explanation! It cannot be as it seems. Dear God! Only find me some way in which I *can* respect and trust him, and I will ask nothing more of life!”

But these passionate prayers were of the spirit, not of the lips. Husband and wife parted without reference to the cause of their divergence. At the last moment she cried out wildly — futile words; she did not know what. She only knew that she would have forgiven him anything to keep him back. But with war, as with grief or death, who shall intermeddle? He seemed touched by her heartbreak, and his rigid mouth melted.

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"It won't be long," he said. "And then — things may go better, girl, by and by."

He went from her bareheaded, and she stood in the window, with the baby in her arms, and watched him until he reached the street. He swam before her burning eyes until they went black blind. The last thing that she saw was the gray lock on his dark hair. It lay flat and stern, like a band of steel across his head.

Who forgets what a spring it was? No one in whom the abhorrence of war and the condemnation of it are so vigorous as scarcely to fall below the personal stake in personal pain. The fields of New England — were they ever so fair? An extraordinary light grew and remained upon them; day by day they received this luminousness of an order so marked, of a gleam so gentle, that one could not but regard it with a startled imagination. It was as if the spirit of peace, terrified and trampled, had fled to the sanctuaries of Nature for protection. On the hills a glory gathered. They interchanged signs solemnly: "There is no slaughter and no heartbreak. Who suffers? We enjoy. Who trembles? We stand. Who calls it War? We call it May."

The summer advanced brilliantly, — a hot summer. The mother of the lad who had been drawn

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to the front by way of the state militia — a summons he thought it would be cowardly to evade — recalled all that she had read, and imagined more than she knew of the semitropical temperatures. Somebody blunders, and preventable disease begins to write its fatal record in the bodies and the lives of men. Chickamauga tells her shameful story to history, and the spectacle of her rotting soldiers disgraces the humiliated flag. Blistering troops, broken by sickness and famine, hurl themselves upon San Juan and mass on Santiago.

We call it May. We call it June. We call it red July. Now, whatever name the meadows and the mountains give it, we must call it war.

To gratify a jingo, to please a politician, men die and women live; the dearest is taken and the loneliest is left; the "little war," like the large one, slaughters and smites at the whim of the fighting animal, man. The women of America and Spain, — the patient, unconsulted women, who may not govern, who cannot fight, — these "give their happiness instead."

Mrs. Dane sat on the narrow lawn in front of her cottage, absently playing with her baby. The low nasturtiums (she had planted them indoors, and early) were in blossom, massed upon the trellis of the piazza, and the climbers crept over the

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white clapboards. Cara's pale, faintly sprigged muslin gown and the white dress of the child took the foreground; they were delicately expressed by the riotous color.

Joyce was a happy child, laughing easily and often. Cara's baby was a natural optimist. He had inherited, with his father's love of pleasure, his father's love of music, and sang many little songs to himself; he seemed to have more happiness than he knew what to do with, and pelted her with the songs. These had a refrain, his favorite:—

“Mum—mumma? Pup—puppa? Pup~~p~~a?”

Cara listened to it patiently.

The surf was heavy that afternoon, and the sea called in the minor key, which (as we have said) Cara fancied that it took towards night. There was a stiff Southerly, and the wind blew as winds do when they seem to have come from a long distance, and to be articulate with messages and meanings that mankind is not wise enough to understand.

Cara addressed the wind: “You come from Cuba,” she said.

Her lips were moving with these fantastic words when Sterling Hart suddenly stepped between her and the brilliant but declining afternoon. He did not speak, nor she. Afterwards she recalled his countenance as it had been that of an angel

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—the angel of compassion whose sacred mission it may be to smite and solace, too. Her startled eyes traveled slowly from his face to his hand; this held a folded paper, an envelope, and yellow; his fingers were purple from the knuckles to the tips where he had clenched them when he crushed the envelope.

“Let me read the telegram,” said Cara, distinctly. “I would rather do it. Hand it to me.”

He obeyed her, without a word, and without a word she read:—

“Killed in the charge at San Juan.”

The yellow paper fell and fluttered to the grass. The child saw it, and laughed, and snatched at it. His little white lap blazed full of nasturtiums, and with one of these, a flame-red one, he beat the telegram. Then he gurgled merrily:—

“Mum — mumma? Pup — puppa? Pup-*pa*?”

CHAPTER XII

DANE had died easily, if not instantly—shot through the head. After a little delay he was brought home, and a grave in the country churchyard of Balsam Groves received him, for Carolyn had wished this to be so. Thus it befell that Dane did not lie in the burial-place of his wife's family, and for himself, he slept, as he had waked, disconnected from the traditions, an unrelated man. It might almost be said that he was a non-conformer to the end. In death, as in life, he did not seem to belong distinctly anywhere, or he did not find the place where he belonged.

Sterling Hart read the burial service over the shattered and disfigured dead, and himself gave over to the wife the last sign and the only comfort left to her, — a handful of bright, black hair; upon it lay the gray lock which had crossed Dane's young head.

Sterling Hart thought of everything. Nothing was overlooked or undone. All the chances of war which one does not discuss with the bereaved, Cara's kinsman had considered thoroughly. Against every freak of fate, which it was neither

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in her nature nor experience to imagine, he had protected her. He sheltered her from every shock, from every care; he spared her all the pangs he could. If, when he buried Chanceford Dane, he believed in his great, honest heart that she was removed from the surest and the most incurable pain of all, Carolyn will never know.

Against the preacher's mighty tenderness she leaned without knowing it, as unconsciously, as inevitably, as upon the everlasting arms of the sacred metaphor. Her mind and heart were not occupied with her cousin. She mourned her husband, and reared her child, and began to turn the unread pages of widowhood slowly. On Sundays her sad feet, like those of other desolate women, carried her to the country churchyard. She remained in the nasturtium cottage as the climbing blossoms clung to the white walls. She had set her tendrils there.

For a time such methods of presenting her pecuniary circumstances to her mind as it was possible for a truthful man to pursue sufficed her; but Sterling Hart knew that this could not last long. He stood between her and the facts, ingeniously averting the time when her grief would yield to her practical sense, and her pride and intelligence unite against him.

Soon after her husband's death, her maid Kath-

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leen returned and attached herself to Mrs. Dane. Whether Kathleen had left her waiter, or he her, no one asked; but that he drank madly everybody knew. The procession of cheap cooks filed out of the nasturtium cottage; the affectionate face of the loyal family servant slipped in, and Carolyn reassumed that measure of domestic comfort which after all goes so much farther to make life endurable than a bereaved person is willing to admit.

To her at this time came, on one excuse or another, her country neighbor, Nannie Hops. Nannie in a way cherished a genuine attachment for Mrs. Dane. This dated back to the era of art portfolios, and the gown of gray and white which Miss Sterling had honored Nannie by wearing on her betrothal day. But that was not the whole story.

Against the brutal scandal which had well-nigh swept the "native" belle of Balsam Groves off her pretty feet, Mrs. Dane had set herself with the quiet force of her still powerful social influence. She had fought for Nannie persistently, with the indifference to popular opinion which was the privilege of her caste. She had trampled on the slander with a scorn equaled only by her determination. Nannie thought that she would have given her saddened life for Mrs. Dane.

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It was more than a year by several months after the death of Chanceford Dane when there befell in late October one of the most memorable storms that the East Shore has known in recent days. It set in slowly, having threatened for forty-eight hours, and reached its climax with the ferocity of the deliberate. The sun had not been visible for two days, and the sky presented a mask like gray felt. The sense of a dying year was everywhere. The sumac and ivy which embellished the boulders left by a fine taste undisturbed in the great places of the summer people, burned dully, and the yellow maples that bordered the village roads stood in rows, like torches half extinguished; many of them were bared before the storm came on, and all day the air had been thick with the ruins of the remainder. Driving, dizzy leaves slapped one in the face if one turned against the wind, and piled under foot on sidewalks and over the long avenues, — chiefly deserted and closed, but still open here and there for a few lingerers on the coast that is earliest sought, latest left, and most beloved of all our pleasure shores.

The temper of the storm was gloomy in the extreme, and there was, from the first, something sinister about it. In the afternoon the blow mounted to an ominous gale. The offshore fishermen (for there were a few who still pursued their natural

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calling in this land of luxury, where the "native" fattened on the city strangers) flapped down in oilskins and rubber boots beyond the life-saving station and below the great cliffs of the Sterling place to see to their dories. These picturesque figures hauled on their mooring lines to tauten them, and yelled to one another—a fisherman shouts, but does not speak—through the roar of wind and surf:—

"There's goin' to be a breeze o' wind."

By three o'clock the telephone wires began to go down. Before dusk it was raining wildly. All the afternoon the cliffs were black with people watching the sea. This raged with an infuriated will, which was as if it were heavy with an unaccomplished purpose, malign and unthwarted; or if benign, too inscrutable for human intelligence. All day the water line trembled with scudding schooners and sloops, reefed to the last possible stitch, and laboring painfully. Everything caught out, got in, if it could; and nothing that was in went out. Every harbor from Boston to Portland was full; after two o'clock no steamer left her dock. The staggering sails on the horizon grew fewer. One white sloop, that ventured too much canvas, drove before the wind for a while, and suddenly went down, bow first. She sank as a stone sinks that a boy has tossed off a wharf; and it was a week

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before anything was known of her. One of the fishermen in Balsam Cove pushed back his dripping sou'wester, and said to his mate:—

“Nawthin’ but one o’ them dum furriners or blarsted coasters will monkey ’round in this here to-night, you bet.”

The houses, like the ships, were reefed. Every blind was fastened, every door locked. Nothing that could give the wind a chance to slap was left carelessly at its mercy. Carolyn had done everything that she could think of to keep the cottage dry and fast. She was sitting in her husband’s office, where there was a fire. Now and then she spoke cheerfully to Kathleen in the kitchen through half-opened doors.

The little boy had been given his supper, and his mother was beginning to undress him before the fire, for there was none in the bedrooms, and the night was cold. The collie was asleep upon the rug beside the child. Joyce, in his little white nightgown, with his yellow curls, made Murillo cherubs of himself against the birch light, passing from one round warm pose to another, each charming, and all happy.

Joyce had the maturity of only children who are shut in to the society of sensitive mothers. For a little fellow he was a large talker, and he had the curious, interrogative temper frequent in boys

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of alert intelligence, and unbearable to every one but parents. He pelted his mother with questions as he would have pelted her with pebbles or nasturtiums.

"Mum—mumma? Is God a zhentleman?"

"Joyce, I told you before. You must not talk too much about God. It is n't nice for little boys to joke about him."

"No, but Mumma, *is* God a zhentleman?"

"Mamma can't answer such silly questions. She does n't know much more about God than you do, Joyce."

"Oh, I know all about him," insisted the child. "I say my pwayers to him, don't I? Boys don't talk to people he don't know. Say, Mumma, is n't God a zhentleman?"

"Listen to the storm, Joyce. There! Hark! Aren't you glad we're not out there in one of those ships? Kneel down and say your prayers and tell God so."

"Clyde gotta say his pwayers 'f I do," objected Joyce.

"Very well. Clyde may say his prayers, too. Come, Clyde."

The boy and the dog dropped obediently to knees and haunches. Joyce rolled his curls upon his mother's lap. With eyes wide open, and one fire-painted cheek upon her hand, he began:—

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"Now I lay me down to sleep—" but there stopped short.

"I raver sing 'em. May n't I sing 'em? I like song pwayers better 'n talk pwayers. Mumma, is God a *zhentleman*?"

"I don't know," said Carolyn, boldly.

The child whisked over on her lap and stared into the fire. In a pretty plaintive soprano he began to sing:—

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
All vose ships sail on 'e deep —"

At this point his devotions came to an abrupt end. With solemn eyes and flaming cheeks he stamped his bare foot upon the rug.

"Mumma? Mumma! I don't b'lieve God *is* a *zhentleman*—sending such a norful storm on all vose ships!"

The nasturtium cottage shook in the blast, and the boy began to tremble. Carolyn cuddled and comforted him; she was one of the women who are born to cuddle and comfort,—a gift by no means bestowed on all mothers,—and as soon as he was asleep she wrapped him and carried him upstairs to bed. When she came down and resumed her solitary chair by the office fire, she found the collie tramping the room restlessly, and whining at the uncurtained windows.

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"There's rockets!" cried Kathleen, running in from the kitchen. "It's a ship! She's struck somewhere! What an awful night to be droonin' in!"

The dog stood up like a person, with his fore paws on the window sill, and gazed seaward anxiously. He looked curiously tall, and unnatural; his sable hair bristled, and his ears went down. Angered because he could see nothing through the darkness, or possibly for some other reason, he began to growl.

"Oh, the poor min! The poor, poor min!" sobbed Kathleen, wringing her sympathetic Irish hands. At this moment the old brass knocker hit the front door hurriedly, and a familiar voice cried:—

"Mrs. Dane! Mrs. Dane! Let me in!" The visitor was Nannie, who pushed in, dripping and excited, in her long raincoat, with the hood over her head.

"There's a schooner ashore! She's struck just off your father's place! The whole town is on the cliffs. I can't stay still. Nobody can. I'm going. Leave the baby with Kathleen, and come, too. Come!"

On the impulse of the moment Carolyn caught on her own raincoat, and followed Nannie into the storm. It was not raining as heavily as it had been, but the gale was approaching a hurricane,

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and it now appeared that fog was added to the perils of the night. This is not common with a gale of that character, but it sometimes happens.

The two women ran over the Sterling avenue, and out upon the cliffs. Each in her own way, both were sea girls, and the passion of the sea was on them. They held each other's hands as they ran, and pushed silently against the wall of the wind. Carolyn noticed, after a time, that the collie had followed her. Clyde was a sea dog, and could no more be kept away from a wreck than other people.

As Nannie had said, the whole town was out, and the cliffs were alive with moving human figures. Some one had built a bonfire, and patches of glare contended with blocks of gloom. From the life-saving station below the cove a wagon was rushing with apparatus. Fishermen were bellowing wildly:—

“It's one o' them yellow-pine coasters! Blowed clean outen her course—God help her!”

Then another answered:—

“Look at her! Look at her! Look! She's struck bows on Sterling's reef! See! See! They've stopped sending rockets. They've used 'em all up!”

“God A'mighty!” said a very old fisherman, slowly. “Hear 'em! Hear 'em! What's the good o' yellin' like that? Ain't we doin' all we *ken*?”

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Mrs. Dane and Nannie got out upon the cliff's edge, and clung together silently. The dog stood trembling with excitement beside them, and the three watched the tremendous scene which had brought the village to the spot.

Upon the forked tongue of the rock known as Sterling's reef, a hundred feet below the piazza of the summer people, the toiler of the sea lay pounding in the breakers. She was a yellow-pine coaster, as the omnivoyant eye of the fisherman had discerned, bringing her cargo from some Southern port — in Florida, it might be. The gale had beaten her out of her course; the fog had blinded her out of her reckonings, and she had struck just off the great chasm — as cruel a spot as could be found upon the East Shore for a boat to batter her brains out. The cliff was not sheer, but ragged, and now slippery with spray, and its slope could hardly be said to hold a fighting chance for a climbing life.

It lacked but a little of full tide, and the shock of the breakers on the granite was something hardly to be imagined by softer shores. The schooner rocked like a chip, and her lights looked as small as candles, seen through spray and fog. She hammered on the reef desperately, as if she had a mind of her own, and were trying to hew a footing for herself, on which to hold like a thing

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of the land. Cries came up, but they were inarticulate. Cries went down, but the throat of the gale swallowed them. No vocabulary was possible between rescuers and perishing but that contained in the signals of the life-saving service.

The apparatus had now come up, piled upon a wagon, dashed by road and avenue, and tearing over the beautiful Sterling lawns. The schooner seemed to roll and stretch her hands to snatch the slender line that carried the first strand of rescue to her. The breakers smote her so that one would have said: "She is swamping."

Carolyn clutched at Nannie's shoulder, and suddenly sank down upon the cliff.

"It makes me faint!" she gasped. "There is a man washed over! I don't think anybody has seen him. He will be dashed to death in the ravine. I cannot — I cannot look any longer."

"I did n't see any man," soothed Nannie. "I am sure you must be mistaken. I don't believe anybody is drowned. I don't believe anybody is going to *be* drowned. I think she struck and wedged herself somehow. I will go and ask."

Nannie ran, and Mrs. Dane sat still. She hid her face on the collie's neck, and sobbed a little from sheer weakness and excitement. She thought, "He is some other woman's husband; and she will never see him again."

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The wreck and the setting of the scene had unnerved her. She sat shivering by the closed and deserted house of her old home ; in fact, she had crawled up against the foot of the eastern piazza — the piazza where she had sat with Dane, and watched the sun rise on the night when the young doctor had saved her father ; she in her long pearl cloak with its rose lining, and furred edge trembling with every breath ; he with his lowered voice, his wooing eyes ; and both hidden from one another in the shelter of that silence which precedes acknowledged love. Her mind worked as that of a very young person will when one is overborne by sorrow or care too early in life ; she experienced as much perplexity as pain.

She naïvely said to herself, "Why, I used to think this was a pleasant world!" Her little boy's question seemed to her to have been let loose on the brutal gale, and to come thundering in on every death-dealing wave: "Is God a gentleman? Is God a gentleman?" She did not look again at the breakers where she had seen the man washed down from the schooner. She said, "He must be beaten to death by this time."

While she sat, for the moment sunken in her own sensitiveness, the crew or a part of them were got ashore upon the life line. She did not watch the thrilling scene, but covered her face from the

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sight of it, and wished that she might never look upon the sea again.

"Don't take it so, Mrs. Dane! Don't!" said Nannie, suddenly appearing in her long, wet coat. "I'm *sure* there was no man washed over. Nobody thinks so but you. And, dear — listen! It's just as I told you. There won't be anybody drowned. Three have come over on the lines already. Cap'n and the mate won't leave the ship, and they say the cap'n's son's aboard, too. But they expect every minute she will — Oh, there! Look! Look! See *that!*"

Nannie cried out, and Carolyn, quivering, got to her feet. The two women clung together, sobbing as women will, in tense moments, while the wrecked schooner yawed in the breakers, rose like a rearing horse, and went headlong, far upon the reef. A tremendous comber dashed her high and dry, and fixed her there.

Now, above the cannonade of the sea, the voice of the very old fisherman uprose shrilly: —

"What did I tell yer? She's run her nose in tight. To blazes with the breeches buoy! Every mother's son of 'em can walk ashore. I bet my dory she'll hold till ebb."

"'T ain't a big crew," he added; "just a handful. If every soul of 'em ain't walkin' Balsam streets come mornin', I'll eat my sou'wester."

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"There!" cried Nannie. "What did I tell you? Now they'll walk ashore on the bowsprit. Mr. Hart is down there," added Nannie, abruptly. "He's trying to help. I saw him with the fishermen."

"He always *is* trying to help," answered Carolyn. "He can't live if he does n't. If God is anything like him—"

Her excited thought worked on: "Is God a gentleman? Is God like Sterling Hart?"

"All the same," she said dully, "there is a man; he was washed over. And God is letting him die down there."

She put out her hand, with the instinct of the lonely and the dog loving, to seek comfort in her collie. She was startled to find that Clyde was no longer beside her; nor, indeed, was he to be seen. She called, but he did not come, and did not answer. She got to her feet and ran along the edge of the cliff, whistling and shouting his name as she ran. Then Nannie saw her throw up her hands, and thought she was crying out loudly, "He has gone down! Clyde is halfway down the cliff—Clyde! Come back! Come *back*, sir! Oh, he will be washed into the surf! He will be drowned, too!"

Impetuous and fearless, Carolyn started to follow the dog. The spray splattered a hundred feet from the caldron below, and hit her, as she groped for the narrow footway that wound across the cliff.

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It was the boundary beyond high-water line demanded by the winter people from the summer people; in this case seldom used except in evidence of possession, as a street railway runs a car over an abandoned track once in so often to preserve its charter.

The path, if such it could be called, was nearly three feet wide, irregular and jagged, now wet and slippery with spray. Clinging like a goat, the col-lie had followed this for some fifty feet, and then abruptly left it. Carolyn hurried after him, calling as she went. But she had not gone far when she was stopped by a tremendous grip upon her arm. Sterling Hart rose above her like some primeval figure carved out of granite. He swung a lantern in his hand, and she could see his commanding face. He wore oilskins and a sou'wester, like the fishermen, and looked a demigod, born of sea and shore. Without a wasted word he turned Carolyn around on the narrow ledge and sternly bade her go back.

"But Clyde will be drowned!" she protested, sobbing.

"I will find the dog. Go back!"

"And there is a man down there. The man *is* drowned!"

The very old fisherman had come to the edge of the cliff, and was looking over. The preacher

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curved a trumpet of his hands and made out to be heard through the thunder.

"John Tobey, come down! Get some boys and come! There is trouble here."

With the shouts of the sea loving and the sea daring, the fishermen scrambled after the preacher. Carolyn, from above, could track them by the swinging of their lanterns. Halfway down the cliff the lanterns paused. The surf, leaping fifty feet, extinguished one. The noise of the breakers was as frightful as it was deafening, but cleaving it sharply, she heard, or thought she heard, the bark of her own dog.

"I vum," said old John Tobey. "There he is! The critter's there! What's he got in tow?"

Drenched by spray, and slipping as he struggled, teeth set in an arm, in a shoulder, in a hip, anyhow, anywhere he could, the collie was trying to drag a human figure out of the reach of the surf. This was dashing already dangerously near the man, and the dog himself was hard put to it to keep his footing. When the fishermen came down Clyde growled. He suspiciously scanned the preacher in his oilskins, and reluctantly yielded to him the broken and unconscious man.

Clyde stood before his mistress, panting and drenched, pleasantly wagging his tail. The dog

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seemed to smile. Carolyn laid her wet cheek on his wet head and kissed him girlishly. When she lifted her face, the preacher and the fishermen were passing by her. They did not speak to her.

There was a little pile of dead, wet leaves blown against the piazza, and on this the rescuers silently laid their burden down. Carolyn saw that they carried an elderly man; his short, drenched hair was quite white, and his face was averted. One limp arm lay out on the grass. His clothes were badly torn from him, and he was so mangled that she turned her eyes away and shuddered.

Her natural self-possession had now come back to her, and with it her natural sympathy.

"Is he dead?" she asked quietly.

"He's battered to jelly," said old John Tobey, "but he's a livin' man."

"Who is going to take care of him?" urged Carolyn, anxiously lifting her tender face to her cousin. "Somebody must. My house is nearest. Bring him there. I will do the best I can."

"Not on any account," replied the preacher, decidedly. "*My* house is nearest. We will take him *there*. This is a case for surgeons and a hospital, whichever way you look at it — but he can't go now. Boys! This way. Some of you fresh hands that are n't tired out! Bring this poor fel-

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low with me. We will give him all the chance he has."

The tragedy of that October gale, like the short story demanded by the modern reader, had its happy ending. The remainder of the wrecked crew walked ashore on the bowsprit, as the old fisherman had foretold, and "every mother's son" was saved. The fate of the stranger whom the sea cast upon the Sterling cliff was not so promptly decided. He lingered for some weeks in the Balsam hospital with a broken leg and mangled head and face; and went upon the dangerous list, but yielded to treatment, and was discharged — to what fate nobody knew. When the preacher, who had conscientiously followed the case, came out from the city to call at the hospital one dark December day, he found the patient gone. He did not return to Balsam Groves, but sunk out of sight as he had sunk from the schooner into the breakers of such life as the friendless and the crippled know.

To Carolyn the whole episode was as poignant as it was painful. Its impressions lasted a long while. The storm, the wreck, the surf, the cast-away crawling like a broken lizard upon the rocks, dragging his shattered limb to save his — who knew how worthless, how hopeless? — life; the dog, daring destruction to rescue this unknown

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specimen of the master, man; the unconscious body as it lay upon the wet, dead leaves against the piazza of her old home—these flashlights faded but slowly from her brain and heart. The individual perished, but the type grew more and more to her aroused and uneasy interrogation. The cruelty of the sea seemed to her scarcely more savage than the teeth of life. Carolyn was no theologian, but the unanswered question of the ages began to gain ground with her: Why? Why? If "God were a gentleman"—why? .

She was beginning to learn that though the first pang of widowhood may be loneliness, the worst is despairing doubt. Lost happiness is easier to bear than lost faith. She felt her lot severe, for she was young, and she had known great joy. But the education of sorrow is never so thorough as when it is given to the nature that has the love genius and the genius of suffering; for these twain are one. With the docility of a sweet woman, Carolyn spelled her lessons out. Although she could not know it, she was about to meet the movement of events which would tear out half the pages of her widowed life, and insert the blank spaces on which experience inscribes the unimagined or the unimaginable.

CHAPTER XIII

DOUCE MARRIOT lay among her great pillows and looked at the loves carved and gilded upon the posts of her Empire bedstead. The little glittering figures carried garlands which met above her on the headboard. At the foot they carried nothing, but sat in groups of two, and whispered, kissing. The room was large and ornate; everything about Mrs. Marriot had always been ornate. There is a simplicity of principle which extends itself to the details of life, and the absence of which tells upon them. The bed-chamber was decorated in yellows, rising to the gold light, relieved by tapestry panels; on the tapestry knights and ladies rode beneath and through oak leaves, dead and brown. Across the room from the bed's foot a mirror flashed from velvet rug to frescoed ceiling. The frame of this glass was swathed in tulle below its parted lace draperies, and thus gave to the complexion that softness which women love, and demand of their mirrors, by any device that art can offer.

Douce Marriot glanced across the gilded loves at the reflection of her too experienced face within the glass.

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“I am a mummy,” she said, “already.”

The woman of pleasure recoiled from the image of the face and body whose celebrated charms had left a trail of broken hearts and wasted homes behind her. She had been ill but a week — a foolish illness, an exasperating thing brought upon her by the neglect of a housekeeper (summarily discharged), whose fatal work could not be undone. The house was cold, the room unsunned, the mattress damp — who knew what? — and the first of May that year was as raw as the grave. The mistress of the most elaborate place upon the East Shore, coming out with her usual business punctuality, had been confronted by the great tax-gatherer, whom no evasion or persuasion may escape. One of the racing pneumonias which are the terror of New England had attacked the superb vigor of Douce Marriot's beautiful body, and that which she had called her soul found itself face to face with the unpleasant circumstance of death. Her keen intelligence was not to be deceived, and since the first forty-eight hours of her illness she had not expected that she would recover.

Her servants and her husband, important to her in the order of this going, attended her dutifully. The house seemed to brim over with relays of nurses, relieving one another with the regularity of the severe or dangerous case. Experts from the city

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consulted every day beside the gilded bed, and the old Balsam doctor turned his less dangerously sick patients over to a colleague, and slept every night at the great house. Mrs. Marriot was aghast at the inconceivable position in which she found herself. That she must some time die like common people, she had, of course, been obliged to admit; but it had never suggested itself to her that this vulgar outcome of a life of pleasure could occur before one was old and ugly,—too old to arouse admiration, or that which she had been pleased to call love. Upon the sex intoxication she had fed all her days. Had she lived long enough to exhaust its interest, she thought she would have minded dying less. Death seemed to her a highwayman, with hands upon her throat, and about to rob her of inexhaustible treasure,—her personal capacity for joy. Who else, she reasoned, had her sumptuous resources? Why could not some colder, plainer, uglier woman die? Some one without her genius for playing the great game between man and woman? Some one who knew less of the delight of living; perhaps—ah, yes, her honest self admitted—some one who bore less of the responsibility of inflicted pain.

She was not fretful or exacting. Her polished manner and her liking to be liked followed her to the end. Her nurses and servants found her con-

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siderate, and her husband, shaken by a real grief, haunted her sickroom.

She put out her already wasted hand, and he, sitting close beside her, took it in both of his.

"Harry?" She spoke with difficulty, but with a distinctness which indicated that she would fight for her power of expression to the last. "Harry, you are very good to me. I don't deserve it. Harry, listen. There are two people I must see. Go send them to me. Let Mrs. Dane come first. I have a word to say to Mrs. Dane. It will not take me long; and then, oh, then I must see Sterling Hart. Don't let there be any talk about it," she added shrewdly. "Bring them separately, and quietly; no fuss. I don't think there is any too much time to spare."

"I will see to it myself," said Harry Marriot, choking. He pressed his quivering lips upon the hand that held his marriage ring. He cared for Douce as if she had been a better wife.

Mrs. Dane passed the open portières of the blue velvet room without looking in. She had obeyed the sacred summons of the dying, but she winced away from it in every nerve. The face of the butler, too poignantly recalled, seemed to her grotesque, like a gargoyle, and to have what she

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would have called the assumed unconsciousness of one. She trod the soundless stairs reluctantly, and entered the sickroom not without marked dignity of manner; but at the sight of the sinking woman her natural tenderness of heart overcame her. She sat down beside Douce Marriot's bed as if it had been that of any other sick person, and murmured something inarticulate in the way of sympathy. Instinctively her hand stirred towards the sufferer, but it fell upon her black dress, and there remained.

"This is very good of you," began Douce Marriot, as if she had been receiving in her drawing-room. "But I expected it. I thought you'd come. You are made that way. And I," she added slowly, "I am made the other way. That is how it came about. I can't talk—not very much. You see. But I sent for you because I had to. There's something I must tell you. I had to send. I've got to say it."

A little gold French clock on the mantel above the flickering fireplace ticked delicately between these labored sentences, as if it supplied a punctuation imperative upon them—the solemn punctuation of time.

"It's not a nice thing to *have* to say—about one's self," continued Mrs. Marriot, as distinctly as she could. "But it is the truth. Mrs. Dane,

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your husband was not to blame — that day. It was not Dr. Dane's fault. It was mine."

Between the ticking of the gold clock Douce Marriot heard one sharp gasp — no more. Carolyn's face had gone as white as the folds of tulle upon the mirror, and looked as if it would crush as easily. But she showed no other sign of agitation.

"It was entirely mine," repeated Mrs. Marriot. Her head, sunken in her deep pillow, tossed feverishly once or twice, but she was as composed as the other, and her physical weakness made this fact, somehow, remarkable.

"I ought to have told you before," she added. "But I did n't. A gentleman does n't explain at the expense of a woman — sometimes not even to his wife. He did n't, — did he?"

Carolyn shook her head.

"I thought not. It would n't be like him. It's a pity. But it can't be helped. I'm going to die. You know that, don't you? Well, I am. And I had to tell you first. I *had* to, — don't you see?"

"I see," said Carolyn Dane.

"The whole blame is mine," reiterated Mrs. Marriot. "When the devil was sick, the devil a monk would be. I found it inconvenient to die without easing you . . . of that. I never did anything I . . . regretted more. Made up the way you are,

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you must have taken it . . . hard. Relieve his memory of *that*. He does n't deserve it. Lay it on me—put it all on mine, when I am . . . floating about . . . a clammy ghost. Lord!" said Douce Marriot, "what a devil of a thing it is to die!"

But Carolyn sat still with her face in her hands. For that first moment her intense personal emotion isolated her from the world and all that was therein; the living or the dying were alike to her, spectres with which she had no concern. Then she uncovered her eyes, and they turned to the panting figure on the bed.

"After all," she said gently, "*you* must have borne the harder end — of this."

Douce Marriot regarded her solemnly. If she had wished to be forgiven, the woman of the world would not say so. She felt that she had received a nobler treatment than she had the right to expect; but she did not put it to herself in this phrase. There are certain high-minded adjectives not apt to be used except by natures capable of that which they represent, and this may be called one of them. The sick woman closed her eyes before the subject wearily; and Carolyn crept away. In the hall she met her cousin, coming from the great blue drawing-room. He looked something startled at seeing her where she was, but asked no questions. They met and passed with a strong

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and silent hand grasp, and the preacher went on, and up the stairs.

"I see that you have no strength to talk. Can you put in a few words what it is you wish to say to me?" Sterling Hart sat by the elaborate bed, and looked with a solemn pity at its occupant.

"It is about this business of dying," said Mrs. Marriot. "You understand the subject; I do not. What is one to do under the circumstances?"

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Saviour," replied Mr. Hart, devoutly.

"Oh, I have always been a good churchwoman," pleaded Mrs. Marriot. "I never doubted the doctrines. . . . Is that all?"

"No, that is not all. You should repent of your sins."

"My—what?"

"I said 'your sins.'"

"Oh, you mean my—indiscretions? My follies, I suppose. I admit that I have been imprudent."

"It is a difference in definition," replied the preacher. "You have sent for me. I am a clergyman of the Christian faith. I cannot play with words or blunt the facts to you. If you do not wish to hear the truth, I can do nothing for you."

"A dying woman! You are hard!"

"No! No! God forbid! Not hard. Only honest, only true."

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"The follies of a gay life! Every society woman makes some mistakes."

"I do not speak of follies. I do not refer to your mistakes. I am talking about your sins. I say you must repent of them before you die."

"I never was spoken to so before," Douce Marriot whispered, "not in all my life."

Panting, she tried to struggle up against her pillows, but fell back. She looked at the gilded loves upon the foot of the bed, and quoted with a dreary smile:—

"What became of them, I wonder,
When the kissing had to stop?"

In the long mirror, between the folds of chalk-pale tulle her own shrunken face gazed back at her.

"I am a Protestant priest," replied the preacher, kindly. "I have no right to force a confession from you. You are an intelligent woman; you can deal with God directly."

"God?" she repeated. "God! What's *that*? I have been interested in other matters. *God*,—*sins*,—*repenting*?" She repeated the three words with a curious intonation. "It is a foreign language," she said, with one of her shrewd smiles.

Mr. Hart looked across the gilded bed at the knights and ladies who rode forever through dead

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leaves upon the tapestry. His eyes assumed a strange luminosity, as if he saw nothing without them, but dwelt on images which came from within.

"If your time is as short as you think," he said in a changed voice, "I ought to tell you the whole truth, or none of it. I ought to tell you the utter truth, or I ought to hold my peace forever."

"The truth!" she gasped. "The *truth*! I want it. I want just that. Tell me what you mean by that word 'sin.' I am a reputable woman. I have never compromised myself."

"No," said Sterling Hart, unexpectedly. "You have been too prudent to compromise yourself. Yourself you have protected. Others you have not protected. There are women with ruined reputations who are less to blame, in the sight of God, than you. You have gone to the very verge of evil — as far as you could — without hurling yourself down. You have played with the greatest danger of a human soul and a human body. You have made this the business of your life."

He was stopped by a low, protesting cry.

"Let me call your husband, your nurses!" urged the preacher, himself almost as pale as she, with the tension of the scene. "You are too weak for this. I will stop where I am. I will offer a prayer

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for you—if you wish me to—and leave you at once. I will not go on.”

But she commanded, “Go on! Go on!”

“It is all in a few words,” he explained. His face worked with an infinite compassion, while yet it recoiled with an exquisite abhorrence.

“You have played with the natures—with the lower natures—of men as if they had been children’s toys. You have broken the hearts of women as if they had been shells beneath your feet. You have made yourself a drunkard of admiration as a man becomes a drunkard of wine. You had the gift of beauty, and you degraded it; of charm, and you debased it. You have been a light woman. This is a sin. The things that you call imprudences are sins. Your indiscretions—they are sins. Repent of them: there is time. Call them by their true names—it is too late to call them by any other. This is one of the things,” added the preacher, brokenly, “that Jesus Christ lived and died for . . . to understand a position like yours . . . to forgive . . . to be gentle . . . to overlook, to forget, to reinstate you in your own soul . . . to restore a precious thing you miss—your self-respect.”

Then she cried out upon him, “*My* self-respect? I lost it so long, so long ago! If I had my life to live over,—if I could begin again — Pray!” said

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Douce Marriot, peremptorily. "You are a good man. You speak the truth. You are not afraid to. Pray for me. Whatever this repenting means . . . obtain it for me. I am very ill. I cannot . . . understand theology. But I am sorry. I am sorry for . . . almost everything."

So the preacher fell upon his knees, and prayed for the soul of Douce Marriot: and the loves upon the gilded bed, that had never witnessed anything like this before, seemed to stop whispering and kissing to listen to him. It was the prayer of a great man, as well as a good priest, and it wrestled mightily for the woman of this world with the forces of the other.

Her husband had stolen into the room, and knelt also, weeping, by the bedside. Douce Marriot put out her feeble hand. She was quite self-possessed, and had a strange expression.

"Harry," she said quietly, "don't cry. I wish I'd been . . . a better wife."

As the healer of souls went out of the sickroom he met a healer of bodies on the way to it. Engrossed in the agitation of the scene through which he had passed, Sterling Hart passed the man without a glance, bowing abstractedly. The physician was a stranger to him, but he knew that strangers had been called to the case, whose hopelessness

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he had taken for granted from the husband's report. When he had passed the man, it occurred to him that this was none of the eminent city experts, and as he stood at the front door he looked back.

The physician was mounting the stairs slowly and with difficulty. He was evidently lame,—an elderly man, and he stooped.

The clergyman observed the doctor carelessly, and passed on. But the butler followed, and said:—

“It's the new one, sir; it's Dr. Royal. The old one from Balsam, he's gone to bury his mother, and he sent this one instead, sir. Maybe he'll be doin' something for her, do you think, sir?”

The preacher answered absently. He gazed at the servant without seeing him, and went out into the cold May noon. As the greatest are the most modest men, so the consecrated are the self-distrustful. Sterling Hart recalled the intense scene of the morning with sensitive challenge of his own spiritual perception and power. Had he gone too far, or not far enough? Had he prepared the woman for another world, or only shortened her life in this?

The healer of bodies limped on up the stairs and entered the sickroom. Dr. Royal sat down

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beside the patient, and touched his finger to her pulse. He did not immediately speak. Mrs. Mariot opened her eyes with a flicker of interest.

“Oh,” she said. “Another stranger? Well, do your best, or worst. It does n’t signify.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE miracles are of every age and always with us. Douce Marriot did not die. The case, considered practically hopeless by the eminent experts, took an incredible turn. Whether the healer of souls or the healer of bodies wrought the marvel, no prudent person was prepared to say. Moral invigoration is a lordly stimulant, and has been known to do great deeds. What we call the repentance of a human soul is a medicine whose place has never been classified in any *materia medica*; and that Mrs. Marriot had actually partaken of this heroic remedy it proved (as soon as anything could be proved) difficult for the scoffer to deny.

The elderly stranger, he who had but a few weeks since begun to practice in Balsam Groves, quietly refrained from claiming his share of recognition for the recovery of the patient. But it was whispered about that this modesty was, as modesty so often is, the mask of power; and it soon became understood that the new doctor was of a younger professional faith than that by which the great houses of the East Shore were accustomed to live or die; in fact, he belonged to a different school of therapeutics, and so it might

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have happened that he gained the case which his more conservative colleagues had lost. At all events, from whatever cause, Douce Marriot got well.

Then there was witnessed one of the splendid spiritual phenomena which sometimes flash across the skies even of our cold days. From a woman in the depth of her being devoid of principle, Mrs. Marriot convalesced into a devotee. With her natural acuteness she perceived that nothing could altogether restore to her the confidence of her own sex or the respect of the other. She went so far as to feel that she must content herself with the affection of her husband and the forgiveness of her God. She reconstructed her life rapidly, with tremendous enthusiasms. She was like a builder who begins at the top of his house. She did not climb a moral ladder, but took a spiritual flight. If she had been a Catholic — so profound was her renewal — she would have entered a convent. Her church provided no such solution for her, and with something of the picturesqueness which belonged to her she did the most appealing, the most dramatic thing within her reach. The East Shore smiled when it went forth that Douce Marriot had joined the Salvation Army.

In process of time the penitent forced the skepticism of society into astonished respect. She

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passed through her moods and phases of spiritual experiment like any mentally undisciplined and emotional woman who had never before given life and the world a thought, except through the brain cells of her own egoism. At first she went so far as to don the uniform, and in a poke bonnet, with a tambourine, she shared the spectacular services of the strange people with whom she had chosen to ally herself.

In due course she passed this stage, and reached a more thoughtful one, whereon, in fact, she permanently remained. Her intelligence, her energies, and her fortune she gave over solidly to the practical work of the sincere and dedicated sect whose simple principles of Christian faith had enlisted her allegiance.

But her time, as much of it as he chose to command, the remodeled wife gave to her husband. Unbelievable as it would have seemed, she became, in a word, a home-loving woman. No decadent fiction would find material now in *Douce Marriot*. She remains to this day an unimpeachable wife. This plain and prosaic rôle she fills with an ease not uncommon among women of pleasure who have renounced their follies before age has compelled them to.

"People say she's got religion," said Nannie once to Mrs. Dane. "At first everybody laughed.

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Now nobody does. Whatever you call it, she's got something, and it's something you can't laugh at if you want to."

"Who should want to?" replied Mrs. Dane. But she changed the subject proudly. Nannie had noticed that Mrs. Dane never spoke of Douce Marriot. Nannie took this to be a sign of breeding in her finely reared friend. She slid from the topic gradually, herself moved by a delicacy partly natural and partly acquired from this acquaintance which was the romance of Nannie's saddened life.

"At all events, there's no doubt of one thing,—it was Dr. Royal who cured her. She would have died but for his happening to be there that day. You see, he practices differently—not the old way. He doesn't drug people to death; he gives nature a chance, anyhow. You know Father says: 'When you say a thing's Nature, you've touched a great subject.'" With filial respect, Nannie evolved Solomon into high-school grammar. "He has helped Father—you wouldn't believe how much. Father thinks so much of Dr. Royal already—more than of anybody, any doctor since—"

Nannie's sentence broke awkwardly, and the girl could have cried at her *faux pas*; but Mrs. Dane quickly set her at ease with the grave smile of one who has, in some sense not shared by

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others, or for some reason unknown to others, become mistress of her sorrow.

"I know how fond your father was of Dr. Dane. But if this new person can help him, this — what did you call him? If this Dr. Prince can relieve him any —"

"His name is Dr. Royal," said Nannie, with a glaze of severity. "Why, *everybody* knows. He is getting a great deal of practice. You wouldn't believe how popular he is already. I must say I think his being cast up at our feet that way had something to do with it. Everybody in Balsam loves a shipwrecked man."

"Oh, is there really anything in that story?" asked Carolyn, absently. "Are they quite sure? It never seemed to me very probable."

"Ask Mr. Hart," returned Nannie. "He knows. Why, I tell you everybody knows. There is no possible doubt about it. This is the man. He went somewhere, after he left the hospital, and got well. Why he should turn up and settle here — He says it's because we saved his life. He isn't the sort of man you ask questions of. His leg didn't set very well. Haven't you noticed how lame he is?"

"I have never noticed anything about him," answered Mrs. Dane, wearily. "I have never seen him that I know of — unless — if there is any-

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thing in this dramatic story—that one night when Clyde saved him. . . . Has *Clyde* seen him?” she demanded suddenly.

“I don’t think so. No, I’m pretty sure not. . . . Mrs. Dane?” said Nannie, abruptly. “What do you suppose I’m going on this way for about the new doctor? You know I don’t gossip, don’t you? I’ve had enough of *that*, haven’t I? Has it occurred to you to wonder what I am talking about Dr. Royal *for*?”

Carolyn shook her head indifferently. She found Nannie, for once, a little tiresome that day. It was a July day, and the two young women were sitting on the cottage piazza screened from the street by drapery of nasturtiums. Mrs. Dane was darn-ing little blue stockings for Joyce, and the boy himself was playing with the collie on the grass.

“Geet up! Geet up! Scat! Shoo! Scat! Why don’t you geet up?” screamed Joyce, shrilly. He flung a handful of pebbles at a passing horse, and startled the creature, who shied. Then Clyde barked at the horse and leaped upon it, biting at its nose.

“There he goes,” observed Nannie. She pushed aside the green and yellow, and looked out. “That is Dr. Royal. There he goes this minute.”

“I am sure I never saw him before,” replied Mrs. Dane, laying down the little stocking to glance.

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"That man — on the rocks — but then I should n't know *him*, either. All I saw was — let us forget it. It was a dreadful sight!"

"Shoo! Shoo!" screamed the boy. "Scat! Shoo! Scat! Geet up! Geet on! Nobody's sick in *this* house! Nobody wants you *here*!"

"The truth is," observed Nannie, boldly, "I want you to do something. I want you to do something to help us — Father and me — and Dr. Royal. I want you to rent him . . . I mean Dr. Dane's — that is, your office."

"Be so good as to explain yourself." Mrs. Dane brushed the little blue stocking off her lap with a touch of hauteur, at which the village girl winced sensitively, but she persisted.

"Old John Tobey's is no place for him; he is very uncomfortable there, and Father wants him in the house. He has set his heart on it, the way he did with Doctor — before. He says he wants a doctor handy. The trouble is, we have rented the old office to the new dentist. We have promised it for a year, and there we are. We can do all the rest of it. We can take Dr. Royal for a mealer. He can have that bedroom off of Father's. We haven't an inch of office room for him under our roof, anyhow you can fix it. I thought perhaps to help Father — to please me — and then, Mrs. Dane," added Nannie, timidly, "he could pay

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you something, the market value of the room. I thought perhaps — ”

“ I thank you, Nannie,” said Carolyn, more gently. “ I will consider it. I will ask Mr. Hart.”

“ If you did,” retorted Nannie, “ he would n’t let you do it.”

“ But if I should agree to do it,” argued Mrs. Dane, “ if I should agree to do it first? Come again to-morrow, Nannie. I will think it over. Tell your father I will consider it very seriously.”

That evening she took her little boy and dutifully went to her cousin’s house. She made the short cut across the lawns of her old home (now occupied by summer strangers), and saw from a distance that Mr. Hart was walking towards her. The three met midway of the iron bridge — Carolyn clinging to the child, with her arm around him.

“ He is afraid of it,” she pleaded, looking down into the chasm. “ I used to love it when I was his age. But Joyce is not like me.”

Sterling Hart lifted the little fellow and carried him over. The preacher had his happiest look. His face was still and shining.

“ You honor me, Cousin Carolyn,” he said. “ I was on my way to *you*. But this is better. This pleases me. Will you go into the house? Or is the piazza cooler? ”

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"I don't care," said Carolyn, uncomfortably. "I have only come to tell you something. It will not take long."

They passed into the large, lonely house. He led her into his study among his books.

"Cousin Sterling," began Cara, without looking at him, "I can't go on this way any longer. I don't know much about business, — I never was brought up to understand those things, — but I am sure there was n't enough left of my property, after my father's — there can't be enough to support us. Don't think I don't guess what you have done, all you have been, how generous, how chivalrous. Cousin Sterling! Cousin Sterling! I would rather die than hurt your feelings, but I cannot go on like this. I must do something, — I must support myself and my child. I am going to teach drawing. Nannie is getting me up a class. They call it an Art School!" One swift, mocking smile went up whimsically from her sad face to the preacher's listening one.

"And I am going to be visiting housekeeper for some — for some of my old friends. An hour a morning for each house, you know. When I get used to it, that will be as easy as swimming. That was Mrs. Marriot's idea. I have quite a waiting list already. You did not think it would come to this when you converted her, did you?"

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But the preacher would not smile. A frowning silence answered her.

"That is n't all," added Carolyn, quite distinctly. "I have rented one of my rooms. I have rented my husband's office to this new person, this Dr. Royal. He is to live at Solomon Hops's," she went on timidly, for she was frightened at the displeasure on her cousin's commanding face. "He will take his meals there, and he will sleep there. This is only for office hours, and, you see, on account of the dentist, and poor Solomon can't live without a doctor in the house, — and he offers a very good rent, — and it pleases Nannie —" she floundered helplessly, and went over her depth in her broken words.

"I can't have this," cried Sterling Hart. "I cannot have it!" He rose to his great height, and stood against the background of his books. The quiet, the shelter, the thoughtfulness of the room, its familiar atmosphere of ease and dignity, for a moment overcame her, and she lifted to her cousin a piteous, homesick smile. He stretched out his arms.

"See!" he said, "they are strong enough to carry it all."

But she shook her head, and weeping, left him. He lifted the child, and in a silence that neither broke, walked beside her across the iron bridge,

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which, still as ever, spanned the gulf between himself and her.

Even the boy did not talk. His respect for the ravine was too great. He shut his eyes that he might not see it, and cuddled on the preacher's neck, his little head curled like a Maltese spaniel's beneath a master's chin. Joyce was always at his best and prettiest with Mr. Hart. The elf or the imp went out of him, and the Murillo cherub came in. The childless man liked the fatherless, unruly little fellow, and a big, warm hand patted him all the way across the iron bridge.

"Mum — Mumma," suggested Joyce, when he had said his prayers that night, "if I were God, I'd be like Mr. Cousin Sterling Hart. I ain't God," added the boy, argumentatively. "I know ain't's bad grammar. You don't need to tell me fings I know. Say, Mum — Mumma, does n't God ever talk bad grammar? I should fink — why, I should fink He'd do it zhust for fun. If I were God, you bet I'd talk bad grammar. I'd do it every Sunday, after shurch, Mumma."

Dr. Royal came slowly up the path to the cottage. He had walked, it seemed, from Solomon's, and was evidently tired. The collie followed him, sniffing at his heels. Mrs. Dane had not witnessed the meeting between the man and the dog,

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which occurred at a little distance from the house; but it struck her as doubtful whether Clyde recognized in the new lodger the derelict whom he had saved from the sea. The dog looked perplexed and excited, a trifle sullen. He stood with one ear up and one ear down, and studied the stranger, while Kathleen admitted him cordially. Afterwards Clyde came to the mistress, and said something which she did not understand.

Mrs. Dane was sitting in the office in her black dress. She rose as the physician entered, and greeted him with that marked graciousness which one assumes to conceal a reluctant welcome. She was pale about the mouth, but she had her charming manner. The physician observed her keenly.

"You are very good to consider this matter," he began at once. "Pray believe that I appreciate your hospitality."

"Let us call things by their true names from the first," replied Mrs. Dane, smiling cautiously. "It is not hospitality. It is business. You need an office, and I—" She stopped.

"You are perfectly right, Madam," answered Dr. Royal, quickly. "We will call everything by its true name—if you do me the honor to admit me as your tenant. It is a pleasant room." He looked about it, sighing contentedly. "A man

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could not ask a more homelike place to—to do good work in. The thing I fear most is that the calls of patients may annoy you. Not that I have so very many yet. But I should be quite candid with you. Their number is increasing. You might find their presence troublesome.”

“On the contrary,” replied Mrs. Dane, with a formal bow, “I am accustomed to that. I am the widow of a physician, you remember.”

“So,” he said, “I have been told.”

Carolyn, who had up to this regarded the man as one looks without seeing, through the film of the emotion and the reluctance that contended within her at the admission of a stranger to her home, now concentrated her gaze upon him studiously. She saw a middle-aged or elderly man as gray as he at whom she had shuddered when he was laid, the mangled prey of the hurricane, upon the dead leaves at her feet. She saw a face bearded as white as its hair, and blasted by suffering; rather a gentle face, appealing, and sad. She was prepared to believe the story of his shipwreck when she perceived how marred and scarred his countenance was. He seemed to have been beaten or shattered by physical disaster. He was, it appeared, incurably lame, and limped at every step; not painfully, but patiently. Nothing about him was, so far, repulsive to her. But his voice—and

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Carolyn was sensitive to voices — was scarcely less than that. It was hoarse, and grated upon her taste, if not her nerves. She made up her mind before he had spoken six words that she did not like it.

She made as short work as she could of the business details necessary to the occasion, and as soon as possible she rose to put an end to the interview. The lame doctor stood leaning on his cane, and she could not help thinking that he met the situation gently, timidly, in fact, as if he were unduly conscious of the trouble that he was about to make her. He gave the impression at that first hour that he was considerate of her, that he was not absorbed in his own interests, that he was capable of appreciating her position and respecting it, as no vulgar man could do.

“He is a gentleman,” she thought. At that instant the little boy pounced into the office, and backed up against her to regard the stranger, who glanced at him politely, — scarcely more than that, — indifferently asking: —

“And his name, Madam?”

“Joyce,” replied the mother; “shake hands with Dr. Royal.”

Joyce debated obedience to this command with a silent scowl, but decided to extend a little critical hand. This Dr. Royal took ceremoniously, as

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if they had been two gentlemen, and dropped it slowly.

"When may I come?" he asked, looking around the office. He had already noticed the bookcases, filled with medical works, well bound and abundant; and he had observed that the glass doors covering them were locked.

"Would you like the bookcases removed?" suggested Mrs. Dane.

"Thank you, — no. My library is not so large. It will occupy but little space."

Carolyn was silent. Common kindness and courtesy prompted her to offer the use of her husband's library to the physician lodger. But she did not do it. Her revolt at the situation in which she had placed herself was more acute than she had foreseen, and she felt it to be impossible to see Chanceford's books in the man's hand.

"When do you wish to come?" she asked, reverting to his unanswered question.

"At once. This evening, — this afternoon, — if I may. Would that inconvenience you?"

Dr. Royal put the point half urgently, half timidly, as if it really mattered to him more than he found it chivalrous to say.

"No," said Mrs. Dane, hesitating perceptibly. "On the whole, I don't know that it makes any difference. You might as well come to-day." If

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her tone said, "And have it over with," her words did not. The lodger bowed without reply, and took his hat.

In the afternoon, Dr. Royal's belongings preceded him. These proved to be few, and easily bestowed,—a box of books, no more than one; his instruments and medicines; a smoking-coat and cap; an extra raglan and pair of rubbers, for wet weather; trifles indicating that the man was obliged to be careful of his health. Just before dark he followed his scanty property. Carolyn winced when she heard the latch-key turn in his hand. She sat still and did not present herself. But the collie did, and the boy. Barking and laughing, the two ran to greet the stranger's incoming step. Clyde received the doctor with respect, or even cordiality, and Joyce played about the office until his mother called him away. She went upstairs to put the child to bed, and remained some time in the little fellow's room. She tried not to hear the feet of the stranger moving about her husband's office, but his steps pursued her shrinking ears. Gradually she became accustomed to the sound as one does to a dull toothache. A few taps from a hammer indicated that Dr. Royal was nailing up his sign above her cottage door.

"Mumma," said Joyce, sleepily, "did God make Dr. Royal?"

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"Joyce, how many times must I tell you? You should not be always talking about God. Yes, I suppose He did."

"I should fink," argued Joyce, "that God would n't trouble himself to make such a sorry-fool man."

"Such a what? Oh, sorrowful."

"I *said* 'sorryfool,' did n't I? Say, Mumma, could God make a green pig if He wanted to? Mumma! Could He make a blue kitty with a pink tail and a purple — purple — purp —"

The sketch of this artistic animal lapsed slowly, and silence received it on her uncritical canvas. When the boy was quite asleep, Mrs. Dane came downstairs. She really had no excuse for doing otherwise. The office door was open, and the warmth of its lights melted across the hall. As she crossed the glimmer, in her black dress, the doctor came out and spoke to her.

"I am going now. Shall I put out the gas, or would you like to have me leave it for a while? I thought perhaps you might — Pray feel at liberty to occupy the room when I am not in it. I should be more comfortable. I do not like to feel that I am turning you out — I should take it as a courtesy."

"Not on any account," quickly answered Mrs. Dane. "I thank you, but the room is yours."

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"Pardon me," said Dr. Royal. "I will bid you good-night."

He bowed, and shut the cottage door. Carolyn remained alone in the living-room. Pugnaciously she said to herself, "I will not step into the office, I *will* not do it." In an agitation of which she felt ashamed, she ran out of the front door, and sat down on the piazza behind the nasturtiums. It seemed to her as if she could not bear the roof over her head. She laid her burning cheek upon the arm of her piazza chair, and so, seeing nothing, started when a voice from the summer darkness said:—

"Has that man gone?"

"Oh, Cousin Sterling!" Half laughing, half crying, she put out her hands impulsively, and the preacher gravely closed his own about them both.

"I never was so glad to see you!" pleaded Carolyn. "Yes, Dr. Royal has gone. Office hours are only from seven to eight. You see he will go early and often, like the American voter. He seems," she added, "to be in poor health. One cannot help regretting that. What do you suppose Joyce called him?"

"What did Joyce call him?"

"A sorryfool man."

"Oh, we're all that! Joyce is usually more

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original — Come down to the shore," said the preacher, "and forget it all. No? Well, never mind. Then I will stay here."

He threw his head back with a lofty motion of his chin that every one who knew him loved.

Carolyn looked affectionately into his powerful, protecting face.

CHAPTER XV

THE point where a repugnance turns into an attraction is as hard to draw as the water-line in a smoky sou'wester.

Dr. Charles Royal proved an unimpeachable tenant. With a tact which Mrs. Dane could not overlook, he tried to intrude on her as little as possible; making himself, so far as he might, a shadow upon the walls of her life. The hours which he spent in his office were limited, and it was a considerable time before he ever exceeded them. Now and then, upon a stormy evening, she observed that he would stay and smoke after the patients had gone. For this indulgence he had asked her permission. At first the scent of tobacco in her widowed house had been painful to Carolyn. She was a little shocked to find how soon she wonted herself to it, and that, in fact, it ceased to be disagreeable to her.

For a week or two she continued to wince from the click of the latch-key in the stranger's hand. Before she was in any sense aware of it, she had begun to experience in this trifling sound something akin to pleasure. Her lonely house seemed

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less desolate to her for the presence of this other lonely person, the quiet, unobtrusive, busy man.

Mrs. Dane was now a woman of business, and it may have been in part her preoccupation in the delight of becoming a wage-earner that forced her out of the morbid reluctance with which she had received her lodger. She began, in a word, to view him and herself more naturally, and so more cheerfully. The physician, whose quiet eye was trained to observe everything, noticed before the summer was over a certain gentle difference in her, like the brightening shapes of a cloud whose shadow one has been watching. Once or twice he thought he heard her singing about the house. They met, of course. Now and then they interchanged a few words. When occasion called for it, they talked a little, — of his practice, of her boy, of affairs. Neither spoke of the other's private history; their attitude was as impersonal as if they had been meeting and parting at some society function. Carolyn's fine dignity found itself matched or even challenged by a reserve quite the equal of her own. In one respect she allowed herself to overstep the invisible line which her tact and good sense had drawn between them. His delicate health appealed to her. She could not restrain her natural sympathy with suffering. She found it impossible not to consider him, to regard

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his comfort. She acquired the sense of responsibility which a warm-hearted woman feels for any member of her household. He observed that she directed her maid to dry his overcoat upon a stormy night. Once, when he had a coughing cold, Kathleen brought him hot coffee; Mrs. Dane had noticed that he drank nothing stronger. One morning—he had been her tenant for six weeks—he found the glass doors of the bookcase containing the medical library unlocked. When he called her attention to the circumstance, she said:—

“Use them. Why not? I have begun to think that I was mistaken about that. The dead are not selfish; it is only the living. I am sure my husband would prefer it. Pray feel at liberty to consult Dr. Dane’s library whenever you choose.”

Dr. Royal regarded her gently. His sad eyes said, “I know what this costs you.” But he did not speak. He handled one or two of the books with the affectionate eagerness of a struggling professional man who finds at his command a library beyond his own means. She saw that his hand was unsteady as he returned the books to their shelves.

“You are kind to me,” he said.

“And you to me,” said Mrs. Dane, impulsively. She was frightened when she had spoken these

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four words, and half ashamed of them. She turned away from him, and drifted out of the office door like a flying feeling. As if it would help matters any, she came bravely back, and explained herself:

"I mean — you are such a considerate tenant. You have made so little trouble. You never make any if you can help it. And you have been very good to my little boy. I have to leave him alone so much. He says you tell him stories, and —"

"Does he?" interrupted the doctor. "Then he tells tales. I advised him not to mention that."

"Thank you for mending the blind the other day," proceeded Mrs. Dane. "And the bulkhead — Kathleen says you did something to that. And Joyce's express cart — I am not a very good carpenter. And I am pretty busy with my scholars and my employers. A great many things have to go —" She paused uncomfortably.

"You have your share of care," replied the doctor, quietly. "Will you permit me to say that you carry it remarkably well?"

"I thank you, Dr. Royal," said Mrs. Dane, regaining herself and speaking ceremoniously. She looked very young in her widow's dress; she had her sweet expression. The doctor watched her with slow, pursuant eyes. But patients were arriving, and their complaining voices rose between

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the two. And now, as Carolyn went out of the door to her morning's work, she met her cousin coming in.

"Where to-day?" he asked happily, falling into step beside her. "Let me go, too — a little way."

"Yes," said Carolyn, dreamily. "You can walk with me — a little way."

Then she began to chat merrily enough. "I have a servant to dismiss for Tracie Benton's mother. And a Mab Miller luncheon to oversee. And my 'Art School' has an exhibition this afternoon. 'Picture it! Think of it!' I am as busy as a miracle. Sometimes I think I *am* a miracle."

"When you are tired of the miraculous, let me know," said Sterling Hart. He looked down from his great height with a grave, composed smile. But his eyes were not composed. He had never been reconciled, as the phrase goes, to Carolyn's stubborn venture at the game of self-support. The Art School and the play at keeping house for East Shore society he could tolerate if he must. The tenant he had never forgiven. Carolyn perceived that he experienced unprecedented responsibilities in her behalf. He made it natural to see her frequently — more often than ever in her life. She felt shielded and beloved by her kinsman. When she was with him he seemed to bound the map of her life. She rejoiced in his familiar per-

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sonality, in his tried character, in his strong, safe qualities. The stranger within her gates passed easily out of her mind. If his sad eyes, his appealing smile, remained with her, it was on the level of that subconsciousness where a lonely woman thrusts the least vital, but possibly the most dangerous, of the conflicting affections that beset her widowed life. Carolyn walked on happily with Sterling Hart. His good spirits, his good health, his good fortune, rested her.

“Dear Cousin Sterling!” she said. “Nobody ever has to feel sorry for *you*.”

Sterling Hart lowered his luminous eyes upon her. He did not find it necessary to reply. She felt, without seeing, that proud upward motion of his chin which she had never known in any other person. It intensified the antique impression of his Roman head and face, with their multiple, modern waves of feeling. He seemed to her — for he had always seemed to her — as much stronger as he was taller than other men; as much nobler as he was more self-commanded. Once she had seen him possessed by an angel’s anger. Why should she recall it now, — in this mystical, magical summer morning? There was an August fog, a great and glamorous shining, half gold, half silver, and all glory. As he towered against the sea-line, this rayed about him, like the aureola of some mighty,

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manly saint. Yet once she had seen him look as if he could have crushed a man by a blow of his clenched hand. He had come unexpectedly upon her husband in one of Chanceford Dane's disgraced hours, and stood looking at the pitiable figure — as he did. He had an angel's beauty, but all an angel's scorn.

The mist in Carolyn's eyes grew thicker than the shining fog.

"Poor Chanceford!" she thought. "Oh, poor Chanceford!"

In the revolution of an instant, "all men beside him were but shadows." He alone had substance who had taken the first kiss from her young lips. That day she went to the village churchyard, and carried flowers from her cottage garden to Dane's rather lonely grave. She knelt beside it in a passion of penitence. Ever since what might be called the death-bed confession of Douce Marriot, Carolyn had felt as if the attitudes had been reversed between herself and her husband's ghost. Whatever her wrongs, she now regarded his as deeper. She sensitively arraigned herself that she had given the natural interpretation to his proud and unfortunate silence. At times she broke her heart over the injustice which she had so blamelessly done him. Her regret was a brimming reservoir which answered to every stir in the sluice of feeling. At

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every crevice her sorrow overflowed in self-accusation. It needed but a touch, a jar, to start the surging current. Swept away by it and into it, she knelt that day and rededicated herself—any loving and grieving woman knows how—to the memory of her dead.

When she rose from her knees she perceived that some one was entering the churchyard by the avenue which she must pass to leave it.

In her thin black dress, with its muslin finish at throat and wrists, with her wistful face, her pale coloring, her wearily folded hands, she stood as if she had been carved upon the marble that marked her husband's grave—a statue of Grief Perplexed. Her uneasiness did not diminish when she saw who it was that she must greet and pass. Dr. Royal had uncovered his gray head. He gave no other sign that he was conscious of her presence, and continued his stroll through the churchyard by another way.

That evening at office hours Carolyn was not to be seen. Patients were many, and the doorbell rang steadily. When they had all gone, Joyce and Clyde pranced in to play with the doctor. But Mrs. Dane remained upstairs. If she listened for the uneven step of her lodger, she gave no sign. His kind, hoarse voice parleyed with the boy, and cherished the dog; absently, she thought. She

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crept down the back stairs, being minded, she could hardly have told why, to escape him. She stepped into the living-room, thinking that she would light the gas, but did not light it, and sat down in the dark, irresolute. The office door was open. Within its plaque of light she saw the man, the child, and the dog, — each quiet, and all content. The collie was asleep, with his long nose upon the doctor's foot. But Joyce — where was the boy? At first she doubted the evidence of her optic nerve, and smote the mist from her smarting eyes to see, and see again, the curling child cuddled beneath a white beard in the stranger's neck; like a love into a cloud or mantle; a little melting shape that trusted where she questioned, and clung when she rebuffed.

In the dark there, unseen, and now unseeing, her face fell into her hands. Against every fibre of her nature, every sinew of her will, she found herself dragged by the undertow of a mysterious attraction. How should a high-minded woman experience the tides that dashed her feeling to and fro? She sat drowned in the crimson of her self-scorn. For there are three tidal waves on the ocean of widowhood. If the first is loneliness and the second despairing doubt, the third is disloyalty to the dead.

Carolyn felt that she was in the breakers of her

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own being. She called upon her husband's name and memory as she would have called upon the power of God if she had been a drowning woman.

"Chanceford! Chanceford! Can't *you* help me?"

The click of the front-door latch interrupted this prayer of the wife. When she looked, the office was empty. Clyde was fumbling in her neck with his cold nose, and her little boy—less keen of divination than the dog—stood calling for her in the hall. She heard the tired step of the lame doctor limping down the path.

Sterling Hart was uneasy. Himself he would have flung to any fate for Cara's sake. He would have effaced himself from her life if that could have purchased her happiness. To give her joy he would have paid any price in personal suffering. His feeling was as simple as Christianity, whose other name is sacrifice. It could hardly be said that personal hope entered very much into his consciousness at this or any other time; although, perhaps, more at this than any other. But that he was distinctly uneasy he did not deny to himself. His cousin's acquaintance with the physician, her tenant, troubled him.

Any persistent idea is a stream which everything tends to increase. Rivulets of impressions

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from one source or another ran into the preacher's prevailing anxiety for Carolyn. One September day he saw Mrs. Marriot driving a Salvation Army lassie to the train, and on the way home she overtook him, beckoning.

"Is Mrs. Dane going to marry the new doctor?" she asked point-blank. "He is a brilliant fellow, and he saved my life. I am under obligations to him that one can never overlook; and it is plainly not my business, Mr. Hart. But—"

"But what?" demanded the preacher.

"I don't know," replied Douce Marriot. "That's just it — *I don't know* but what."

In October Nannie Hops came on some trifling pretext to the preacher's house. The girl seemed troubled, and there was a tangle in her pretty brows.

"Father returns the magazines," she began. "He thanks you, Mr. Hart. Mrs. Dane and I carried some to the Art School to show the pictures. Mr. Hart, there's something I want to say to you. It is about Mrs. Dane."

"Go on," said the preacher, for Nannie stopped.

"If she should marry Dr. Royal —" faltered Nannie. "You know how much we think of Dr. Royal, don't you? You won't take me the wrong way, will you? I — why, I *admire* Dr. Royal!" cried Nannie, vehemently. "But —"

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"But what?" asked Sterling Hart, as he had asked before. And, as before, the answer came: "I don't know — Mr. Hart, I *don't know*. There are things—"

"What things?"

"I don't know how to explain myself. There seem to be reasons —"

"What reasons?" persisted the preacher.

"That's just it," said Nannie. "If I could put my reasons so you could understand them, — but I can't do it. I don't know how to tell you why I feel the way I do."

"I think you ought to be explicit," replied Cara's kinsman, frowning.

Nannie said a few words in a lowered voice.

"Is that all?" cried the preacher. He gave a large masculine wave of the hand, as if he dismissed an unimportant and feminine thought.

"It is nothing against Dr. Royal!" repeated Nannie. "It is n't the first thing against Dr. *Royal*. But — Mr. Hart! Don't let Mrs. Dane marry again. Don't let her marry *anybody*. It — it's too soon."

The preacher stared at the excited girl; he had gone quite pale. He felt, for the instant, as if a sacred secret, scarcely admitted by his own soul to itself, had come back to him from the atmosphere in articulation.

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It proved to be a cold winter, and life in the cottage became difficult and bare, accordingly. All that remained of the threadbare nasturtium draperies on the piazza trellis broke away under the first big storm like a valuable old rug that has been put into a washtub. The furnace was middle-aged and as fretful as a sick woman. The plumbing was fickle, and the halls drafty. Kathleen had the toothache, and Joyce took cold. The boy's little illnesses the doctor treated skillfully, with a care amounting to tenderness. To the assortment of emotions with which she now regarded her tenant, Carolyn began to add gratitude.

Dr. Royal was chronically, ingeniously kind. Too often she heard him limp down the cellar stairs on a bitter evening, to feed or inspect the old, cold furnace for her. Sometimes in the drifting snows she would find the lame man digging out her paths. He put aside her protests as if they had been snowflakes that he rubbed out of his eyes; quite silently. It proved difficult to conceal the shifts and secrets of her impoverished household from him. Nothing escaped his knowledge, as nothing eluded his relieving instinct. He began to seem to her the most thoughtful of men. Over the disk of other manly qualities that she had known his slowly advanced; as an eclipse slides over the moon or the sun. It was impossi-

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ble to disown the terrible candor of memory which confronted the dead with the living; and unhappily for the ghost of Chanceford Dane, marriage had not expiated the faults of his careless nature to his wife.

Dane's had been a gay, gregarious nature, debonair and winning. Charles Royal was a thoughtful man, personally unattractive, and morally a magnet. Dane had not been always kind. The doctor had an undiverted tenderness. Dane had neglected her when he felt inclined. Royal had the plain, domestic devotion which women rate so high in the scale of masculine qualities. Dane had demanded everything, and given what he chose. This man asked nothing, and gave her all he had—his silent homage, his delicate protection. He had the attitude of romance in the dull conditions of daily life. He was to her as if she had been the queen of the sad earth and the happy heaven. Yet it was impossible for her to deceive herself—she knew that he loved her; the more, because he did not say so. Her common prudence and common sense taught her that this man of an unknown past, of an uncertain future, must not be permitted to endear himself to her. But her trembling heart told her that she was approaching the invisible boundary where a man and woman must separate or unite. She recognized the way-

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marks of the familiar road with the cautious candor of one who experiences a second love, and who would convince herself, if she could, that she was not disloyal to the first. Again she knew the eternal pang and the eternal joy which keep the world's heart young.

"This cannot last," she said. "I must put an end to it." Sometimes she added, with the docility of a little girl who lives in awe of family traditions, "Cousin Sterling is perfectly right. It has got to stop."

But nothing stopped. The romance and the winter ran their course. As Cara sat attentive to the rhythm of the surf upon the ice-bound coast, it seemed to her as if she listened to some ancient saga frosted with the rapture and the bitterness of life; to some perplexity as new as last moon's phases; some secret as inscrutable as to-morrow's fate.

Sterling Hart watched her with mute, strong eyes. He came out frequently from the city; so often that she felt the silent protest of his presence against the current of her heart. He observed her sadly. Less and less he argued with her or counseled her. Once again he felt himself rivaled by the inferior nature. Now, as before, he was baffled by the magic which wove its web around her.

It will be well remembered by his people and

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by the public that the Reverend Sterling Hart did that year a thing not very common in the pulpit of his church, and without recent precedent in his own. He preached what is known in the phraseology of moral reform as a temperance sermon.

It was a Sunday evening sermon, after Easter, in late April. The church was crowded to the aisles, and largely filled with men. It had been understood that the eminent clergyman would treat the subject of the drinking habit, and a perplexed surprise was felt by the ignorant — none whatever by the wise — when it was noted that he handled his vulgar theme with an extraordinary reserve.

He did not describe degradation. He portrayed nobility. He did not depict the deformities of sin. He dwelt on the beauty of holiness. He spoke of honor, of self-control, of purity. He spoke of strong and steadfast qualities, of beautiful and winning things; of all that is high-minded, whole-souled, and clean-bodied; of all that a man might be who honored his manhood — not of what he had become who had failed in reverence for it. Once he drew himself to his commanding height (one of his people who loved him used to call it "his archangel size"), and his noble countenance blazed with a white fire of contempt and pity such

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as one may live a long life and not see on any face.

"And yet," he said, "there are men who give themselves up to low sins . . . *and drunkenness.*"

As the preacher spoke these words, far back in the packed house his luminous eye fell upon two men, one young, one elderly, sitting side by side, and listening with held breath. Something in their attitude and absorption, something more in their appearance, arrested his attention. One of the men he knew, and the other—he thought the other was no stranger. But as he gazed, out of the man's soul there leaped a look—one only—before which the preacher's startled heart stood still. As soon as the service came to an end he disappeared from sight, and in an incredible time, still in his gown and surplice, his forehead wet yet with his emotion, reappeared in the crowd of worshipers who were thronging to the vestibule. The younger of the two men who had aroused his attention was about to push through the muffled doors when the clergyman laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Timothy? Timothy George?"

"Well, sir," said Timothy, deferentially. "It's me, sir. That was a wonderful fine sermon, Mr. Hart."

"Never mind the sermon," said Mr. Hart.

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"Where's the man? Who was the man that sat next you? Has he gone?"

"He seems to have," replied Timothy, with a stolid, guarded look.

"There was something about him," insisted the preacher. "I thought at first I knew him. I was sure I did. But he was so far off, — and the light was dim. Then I thought, — do *you* know him, Timothy?"

Timothy was silent.

"Come with me," said Mr. Hart, authoritative and pale. Now Timothy was one of the preacher's penitents, and he followed with docility to the pastor's room. There Sterling Hart shut and locked the door.

"I thought," he repeated, "that I knew that man, — and while I was preaching, suddenly he seemed to me — I thought I was mistaken. Was I?"

"I don't know, sir," said Timothy, doggedly. "If I did, I don't see as I've got any call to jabber, — do you? But I don't. I tell you, Mr. Hart, *I don't know.*"

"Very well," replied the preacher, rising. "Good-evening, Timothy."

Timothy stood twirling his respectable derby in his decently gloved hand. He looked troubled and irresolute.

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"Mr. Hart, sir, you saved my life,—my scanderous life. And you 've saved *me*,—me that used to drink like a codfish till you caught me with your trawl. I don't believe I've got any call to refuse you anything you want of me. Do you?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered the preacher wearily, irresolute in his turn. "You must judge for yourself. You have a conscience of your own. Use it."

"I'm willing to tell you," said Timothy, slowly, "what I *don't* know."

"Very well," replied the preacher. "Sit down, Timothy." Timothy sat down.

"When I left Balsam Groves that time," he began, "you know, sir, I've never been back?"

"I should not advise you to do so," replied the preacher, gravely.

"Rum done it," urged Timothy, falling back on his old phrase.

"But nothing can undo it, Timothy. I have told you before. Some things never can be undone in this world. That was one of them."

"Folks say there is a dentist," suggested Timothy, suddenly diverted from the topic which had brought him to the pastor's study. "Is she going to marry him?"

"We did not come here to discuss the young lady," replied Mr. Hart, with some severity. "You

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were about to tell me more particularly what occurred when you left Balsam Groves."

"Maybe you have forgotten I went West," said Timothy. "I went to ——" Timothy named a large and thriving city. "It's one of those places where strangers float like spars. If it's a woman, folks say 'What's the matter with her?' If you're a man, they say 'What's he done?' I beat about there, you know, sir, for a year, and then ——"

A knock at the pastor's door cut Timothy short. Mr. Hart admitted one of the wardens; it was something about a quarrel in the choir. The pastor listened patiently. When the warden had gone, he locked the door again.

"Now, Timothy," he said, "go on." Timothy resumed his story.

CHAPTER XVI

THE collie Clyde sauntered out into the street, sniffing the cool May evening. He had the air of a gentleman of leisure making up his mind which one of his clubs he would run into. His manner was detached and assured. His fine eyes had their mildest look, and he smiled broadly, as he had been taught to do when he was a puppy and wished to make himself attractive. A boy might have to stay at home on a pleasant evening and say his prayers and go to bed. But a dog had life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness left at his command. Of these Clyde made the most in a well-bred way; speculating idly while he protected the family, keeping the nasturtium cottage well in the corner of his black-brown eye, upon the incidents or occupants of the community. For instance, neighbors. This subject had the infinitude of eternity to the collie's mind. There were new ones, strangers, presumably about to occupy the dog's old home, the Sterling place. For some days signs of life had stirred about the grounds, and wheels had rolled heavily up the long, muddy avenue; luggage had arrived; mechanics had come

and gone; tradesmen had whistled up and away; evidences of impending habitation had multiplied; and the topic was perplexing. Clyde strolled over the road, stationed himself at the opening of the great avenue, and sat with one ear up and one ear down. The symptoms of human approach he understood, but human gossip was unfortunately occult to him. Clyde had an excellent vocabulary, but it was not varied enough to suit the occasion. He had heard the master race talking of brides and honeymoons. But what was a bride, and what a honeymoon? This was not in the language of his tribe. More than once he had heard it said in his presence:—"There was never any bride there before but Mrs. Dane." But the collie had no lexicon; he found the idiom untranslatable. The only point perfectly clear was that trespassers existed, and that they had chosen the family property for an intrusion possibly capable of explanation, but not yet justified to the judgment of the family dog. Clyde sat between the two great stone posts of the Sterling place, and considered the matter.

Now, the truth of it had not by human expression or canine instinct reached the collie's intelligence. Clyde as yet had no perception of the fact that the villain, who (in his own words to Sterling Hart on a tragic summer evening some years ago) had been dismissed from the stage in the first act,

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had returned to flit across it for a brief and final scene.

It was a strain to the imagination to think of the vivisector as a bridegroom; it was not without a sense of humor that one identified the golf champion as a bride; but thus it was, and was to be. Whether Mab Miller, the golf girl, had married Dr. Frost, or he had married her, was one of the uncertainties of history; but that they were married was past dispute. The tenants of the Sterling place (whether friends of the bride or relatives of the bridegroom), who had leased it for two or three years, had amused themselves by one of the pretty attacks of hospitality which the East Shore assumes easily and even often; they had offered their great house and their own servants to the bridal couple for the month of May, disporting themselves on a yacht in Southern seas until the honeymoon should have waned from "their own hired house," and trying to believe that they had in so far added to the romance of the world. It proved harder to think so than one would have expected. The vivisector and the golf girl were not poetic material, make the most one might of it. But they were facts; and they were there. They had steamed out from the city in a white, flower-strewn automobile after their noon wedding; and as quietly as possible, and almost

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unobserved, had whirled up the avenue, and possessed themselves of the old, stately house, as dear to Cara still as the pangs of a lost love, and always thought of by her gently and in silence, somewhat as she thought of her husband's grave.

She had not seen the bridal car when it raced up; and as it happened, Clyde himself had missed this tremendous event. The collie was conscious, as dogs are of lost opportunities, that something of interest had occurred, witness of which fate had denied him. He sat rather sullenly guarding the egress from the avenue, that nothing more might escape him. While he did so, he saw that the automobile was rushing down. He arose with dignity and reluctance to avoid the juggernaut, and stepped aside upon the lawn — disdainfully, because he perceived that the carriage and the chauffeur were both strangers. As the car dashed past and whirled away, something dropped, and Clyde put his paw upon it. It was a man's glove, a faultless bridal glove, worn for an hour, loosened and forgotten. With one ear up and one ear down, the dog considered the glove for some moments. But these were incredibly few. With a howl of rage he flung himself upon it, worried it as if it had been a rat of the lowest social order in the vermin world, and, suddenly tearing it as if it were shredded flesh, muscle from muscle, nerve from

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nerve, he dashed it away, and leaped up the long wooded avenue. As he went, he took mighty bounds, scorning the earth, scaling the air. But when he approached the house the dog grew astute, crushed his anger into diplomacy, sniffed, and secreted himself, watched, crawled upon his belly, hid, and smouldered in the shrubbery. There, a quivering, splendid creature, with ancient, unfor-given wrong tense in every rigid line of his beautiful body, with death and fire in his eyes, and an ominous patience in his attitude, the collie bided his time.

It had been a clear, late sunset, and a brilliant moon arose. There was no darkness, but the evening advanced from glow to gleam. The windows of the great house flashed warm light, and the movements of a luxurious home set in as quietly and steadily among the trained servants as if the place had been occupied for six months. The bride (in Cara's old room) was dressing for dinner, and the newly wedded husband strolled out of the house; he had the thoughtful mood in which the most thoughtless of men will find himself upon his marriage evening.

Thomas Frost sat in Mr. Sterling's wind chair upon the piazza that faced the sea, but the night was cool and he did not remain there. He got up and paced the piazza for a while. He did not

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smoke. His tall, rather military figure moved to and fro with precision. With a cold gray eye he observed the sea. Both his firm, sinuous hands were in his pockets. His mind was active. What he called his heart was occupied. His heavily lined face assumed the mould of satisfaction, — with himself, with his marriage, with his position, with his prospects. That he had been appointed to the Chair of Physiology in an important New England Medical School was, he reflected, no more than his distinguished skill as an experimenter deserved. He would enter upon the honors of his professorship soon after the expiration of his honeymoon. This, meanwhile, after the scientific method, he set himself to appreciate. Once he left the piazza and walked restlessly among the shrubbery, glancing towards the nasturtium cottage, which, for the thickness of the intervening trees, he could not see.

“She made a most unfortunate marriage,” he thought. He raised his eyes to the windows of his wife’s room ; her substantial shadow passed before the shade. Just then she raised it, opened the window, and saw him. The muscular arm and hand which had wielded the best brassie and driver in the Country Club relaxed and wafted down a kiss. This the bridegroom felt under obligations to return. To do so, he withdrew his right hand from

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his pocket. Then Mrs. Frost let down the shade again.

He was standing looking up, moonlit and visible every contour of him in the bright night, every personal sign and scent of him given to the soft wind, when the shrubbery behind him stirred a little, as if a snake had crawled through it. Thomas Frost turned to reënter the house, and had set one foot upon the piazza steps, when an ominous muttering sound annoyed his ear. This grew into a formidable growl. A dog, raging with memory of the unforgiven, leaped and sprang. The collie would have none of the physiologist's body except his hand, — the hand that had committed the unpardonable sin of all that man may inflict upon an animal; the hand that had dissected conscious, helpless flesh alive. Clyde's teeth fastened upon the vivisector's cruel, valuable right hand, and crushed it, crunching.

Kathleen had her evening off that day, and Joyce had been answering the doorbell. But the child was now in bed; patients were many; the reception room was full, and Mrs. Dane had taken upon herself this domestic task. The front door was closed. A long scratch, followed by a heavy, thumping sound, besieged it, and two or three sharp peals of the electric button succeeded. Caro-

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lyn opened the door, and said, "Why, Clyde! Did *you* ring that bell?"

No person was visible, and she let the dog in. He was panting heavily, and quivered in every nerve. As if he had been a child, he flung himself upon her lap, and put his paws about her neck. Although his eyes were wild, they had a solemn look. He whined and sighed, and then he began to sob like a little overwrought boy. Cara bent and put her cheek upon his forehead to comfort him. As she did so, she perceived that his mouth was dripping, and that it dripped red.

The telephone called loudly at that moment, and the doctor answered it without delay. With a word of explanation to his waiting patients, he hurried limping out into the hall, and seized his hat.

"It is an emergency call," he said to Mrs. Dane. "There seems to have been a little accident among those bridal people. I must go at once."

He was gone some time, so long that the patients grew discouraged, and drifted one by one away. When he returned, the office was empty, and the house was still. Clyde was asleep upon the rug; in his sleep he groaned and growled. Mrs. Dane was sitting by the office fire. She rose to greet the doctor, but asked no questions.

"Can I have a little hot water?" he asked quietly.

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She brought it, and he boiled it over his alcohol lamp, that he might sterilize his instruments; he put them away before he spoke.

"There is something you have got to know, and I may as well tell you. It is an unfortunate affair, and Clyde was mixed up in it. He has bitten a man."

"Not — not —" she began, and paled.

"Yes, he has bitten Dr. Frost. He has hurt his hand pretty badly — his right hand."

Cara got down upon the rug beside the dog, and drew his head upon her knee. Her trembling fingers touched Clyde's old scar — the scar so deep that the hair had never covered it.

"He may have had a reason!" she cried.

"Yes, I know," replied the doctor.

"What do *you* know?" The searchlight of her troubled eyes traversed the physician's face.

"He told me," observed Dr. Royal, quietly. "He explained the circumstances. He said that he once experimented on the dog — of course not knowing him to be yours. He said that Clyde had never forgiven him; that he had attacked him before."

"Oh, what will they do to Clyde?" moaned Cara. "If they are going to kill him, I would rather do it myself. I will chloroform him. No one else shall touch him." She began to tremble heavily.

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"Don't distress yourself," said Dr. Royal, kindly. "Clyde will not be harmed. Frost does n't want the story to get out. I don't think he is particularly proud of it. He says he does not wish his wife to know. He invented some explanation of the accident. I think it will pass. I believe he slipped on the rocks; had a bad fall; a rolling stone hurt him; something of that kind—that is his business. Mine is to keep a patient's confidence—I told you because—"

"Yes," interrupted Carolyn. "You had to tell me. I ought to know. We shall have to keep Clyde tied up."

"Till Frost leaves the village, I think you will. He won't stay any longer than he can help. If it proves serious, he will go back to town, where he can get a bigger surgeon than I am."

"Will he lose his hand?" asked Carolyn, with difficulty.

"No, oh, no. Only his honeymoon. With proper care, I think we can save the hand; but I am afraid—it will be rather stiff."

"It is shocking!" said Cara, with emotion.

"It is unfortunate," replied the doctor. "Nemesis usually is. The most interesting thing to me about it—" he paused.

"What *is* the most interesting thing to you about it?" demanded Mrs. Dane.

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"Why, that he does n't want his wife to know. The terrible and beautiful power of the marriage bond has set in already."

"Upon Thomas Frost?"

"Even upon him."

The two were standing opposite each other as they exchanged these words. Their eyes, brimming lakes of feeling, met as if they united in one unfathomable sea. Carolyn felt herself swayed to the deeps. Between her allegiance to the vanished and her attraction to the apparent, she vibrated in a piteous vacillation. The old contention between the quick and the dead made havoc of her, and she had no more power of resistance to it than a battleground has of rebellion to conflicting armies. The moment had become so tense, it was with a sense of escape that she heard the steps of her cousin upon the piazza, and turned at his familiar hand upon the door to meet and greet him. This she did with a cordiality so assumed that he felt it—his hurt face showed how much. He glanced from her to her tenant, first with the priest's and then with the prophet's look.

Clyde came out slowly to extend the hospitality of the cottage to its kinsman. The dog walked with dignity. Not a cloud of guilt lurked in his fine eyes. He spurned the floor with a lofty pride.

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He had the air of a noble avenger, who had righted the wrongs of a race.

Impulsively, without remembering that she was not free to speak of it, and because she had always told everything to Sterling Hart, Carolyn hastened to give the story of what had happened. She saw that Mr. Hart was troubled, if not alarmed.

"I will go right over and see him," he said, turning about.

"Excuse me," interrupted the physician, stepping forward, "but this matter is not to be known, if you please. Mrs. Dane very naturally made an exception of you — as I was forced to make one of her. But nothing whatever should be said. In any event, I am sure you would wish to wait before calling on Dr. Frost. He is really in too much suffering to see any person."

"I am not attached to Dr. Frost," urged Mr. Hart, with some feeling, "but it is precisely where there is suffering that my profession calls me."

"And that mine, in this instance, must dissuade you," said the physician. "I would advise you to wait for some days. We don't know yet how this is going to turn out. I may have to spend most of the night with him. He is considerably hurt."

The two men regarded each other in surcharged silence.

"Very well," said the clergyman, "if the case is

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yours, I will not go — not at present. Instead, if you please, Dr. Royal, I should like a short interview with yourself. In fact I may admit, if you will excuse me, Cousin Carolyn, that I came with this purpose in view. I thought I should find you, sir, at your office hours."

Carolyn moved away quickly, and her cousin shut the office door. She thought, but she might have been mistaken, that he slipped the key. He remained in the office for a long time. She could hear the poignant murmur of their voices, interspersed with significant silences. She grew uneasy, she could not have told why. As the interview progressed, her discomfort increased.

To escape her unpleasant position, she wandered restlessly about the house, and thinking to make sure that Kathleen had left the dampers as they should be, went into the kitchen. Now Clyde had shadowed her closely, aggrieved that he was denied the society of the two gentlemen upon an evening so eventful in the family history; jealous of attention, and nervous for praise, he pushed through the pantry and pawed at the office door. This was not locked, and Clyde, who was distinguished for his ability to open doors, forced the latch by means best known to himself, and lunged in, heavily and pleasantly wagging. There was a distinct interval before the door was closed again,

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and in this time there wandered out to Mrs. Dane's apprehension the articulation of these words:—

“You may be the most irreproachable man in this world, sir, but we know nothing about you. Your past is a blank to us. Your present is a mystery. Apparently you have no antecedents, or none which you are willing to present. I am the only living kinsman of this lady who has the right to protect her. In my judgment, your presence in Mrs. Dane's house has continued long enough . . . if not too long,” added Sterling Hart, with fervor.

Wincing and quivering, with fire in her cheeks, and her heart leaping in her throat, Carolyn shrank back. Her first impulse was to enter the room—it was hers—and confront the two men with the matter under dispute between them—it was her affair. But the instinct of a lady to avoid a scene deterred her. She went back into the living-room, and stood still,—tall and distinct beneath the lighted gas, trying to decide what she should do.

This she found not easy, and she still remained irresolute when the key slid in the office lock, and the door opened. Mr. Hart held it ajar with his hand upon the knob. He had his giant look; his face was imperturbable and grave. He was saying

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—and it struck Carolyn that he made no effort to conceal from her that he was saying:—

“I have put the case to you plainly, man to man. I have explained my reasons to you — why I experience the uneasiness that I do. I will deal with you fairly, but you will do as much by me . . . and by this lady, sir. Give us your credentials. Clear up the points that I have mentioned. I will give you, — Dr. Royal, I give you a week.”

Sterling Hart crossed the cottage hall, and confronted Mrs. Dane with a gesture at once commanding and entreating.

“Good-night, Cousin Carolyn,” he said gently. “I am afraid that I perplex or grieve you. I have no alternative. I will explain myself — with Dr. Royal’s permission — at another time. We are all tired to-night.”

He closed the cottage door, and his strong step rang down the walk. Mrs. Dane and her tenant stood regarding each other silently. The collie ran between them, restlessly whining. Joyce in his bed upstairs waked and called:—

“Mum — mumma?” Maudlin with sleep, the little fellow dribbled into the dialect of his babyhood: “Mum — mumma? Pup — puppa? Mum — ma?”

Mrs. Dane ran up to the boy, and when she came down the office was empty. The doctor had

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gone for the night. She realized, not without a pang of perplexity, or even anxiety, that he had gone without a word.

The vivisector lay upon the couch in the Sterling drawing-room and nursed his mangled hand. His wife devoted herself to his emergency without a weakened nerve. She read to him for hours; her strong throat never tired. She tramped on errands for him all over the village. Her well-developed feet made frolic of the six-mile walk to Balsam which she took to find the particular orchids that struck his scientific fancy. For what might be called more human flowers, Thomas Frost did not care. It occurred to him that he had married a healthy, sensible, and not a selfish girl, who could attach herself to a man in the proper feminine ways as successfully as she had wielded a brassie. He went so far as to wonder if the golf girl, after all, might not prove a champion wife. But upon mere matters of sentiment his mind did not dwell tenaciously. His enforced inactivity and acute suffering had converted him into a raging schemer. His gray eyes smouldered like cool embers.

Against the dog he was powerless, perforce. A man cannot sacrifice his reputation, or even his domestic happiness, to private vengeance upon an

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animal. Unfortunately, Mrs. Frost was fond of dogs; she had three in her father's home.

Then, if the story should leak out, his colleagues would be ill pleased. The new professor would start under a sentimental cloud. A disabled hand might be overcome; demonstrators could be found to perform the butchery while he supplied the oratory of his brilliant experiments. But when it came to a moral blur, what could be done? No understudy could supply the ethical quality.

But for this obstinate fact, Clyde would have been shot through the head without delay. The vivisector was not stupid, and he accepted his situation. Against the dog he could not avenge himself; but the woman remained.

Thomas Frost had some years since passed the point of sensitiveness to the sight of suffering. It had become as easy for him to inflict as for another man to spare. He thought of Carolyn Dane with a cold conviction that if she could be made to suffer for the fault of her dog, it would not be more than she deserved, at least no more than he was willing to impose. He brooded upon the matter with an icy bitterness.

While receiving the surgical attention of Charles Royal, he scrutinized the man. A chance question to the old Balsam doctor; a clever hint to the consulting surgeon from the city; a few flying

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arrows shot into the mind of Sterling Hart when the preacher made his priestly call — these psychological experiments occupied the ruined honeymoon of the vivisector. The human heart had become his laboratory, and in this, though something of a bungler at that finer art, he worked with a determination which was a substitute for skill. The experiment did not occupy much time. Within two weeks Dr. Frost returned with his wife to her father's house, where three fine dogs embraced the bride, and sniffed at the bridegroom.

Sterling Hart did not return to Dr. Royal's office within the week whose iron boundary he had set before the man. He lingered two weeks; he delayed for three. If he came to see his cousin, it was at hours when the tenant could not be found, and to speak of subjects in which the doctor had no concern.

It could be seen that Mr. Hart obviously avoided the matter which had annoyed and troubled Carolyn upon his earlier visit; and she, full of a mingled emotion, half resentment and half fear, did not herself recall it.

But one evening in the later May — a rainy evening, when patients would be few — the preacher presented himself in office hours, and asked distinctly for the doctor.

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The two men met courteously, but without cordiality. The preacher, with some hesitation, took the patient's chair. The physician retained his own. His manner was as grave as that of the other, and possessed, it might be said, an equal dignity. He was, in fact, the first to speak.

"Well," he said, "my time is more than up. I am not sure whether I should thank you for the reprieve. But I am ready to hear whatever you have to say to me."

"It will not take long," replied the preacher; curtly for Sterling Hart. "It is chiefly in a word: You have given me to understand that you are an educated physician, properly graduated."

"I have, because I am."

"You possess, of course, the diploma of some accredited institution?"

"I don't frame it and hang it," returned Dr. Royal, with a smile whose bitterness was disguised by its gentleness. "It is in one of the drawers of my desk."

"Are you willing—pray excuse me—that I should see it?" asked the preacher point-blank.

"No," said the physician, with equal bluntness. "At least," he added, "not under the present circumstances. I can conceive of those in which I might be."

"Pardon me," proceeded Sterling Hart, with-

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out smiling, "but the time has come when I must tell you that it is said, — I have been told, — the authority is good, Dr. Royal, or you will believe that I should not act upon it. I learn that your name does not stand upon the list of registered physicians of this state."

"Have *you* been meddling — looking that up?"

The lame doctor got to his feet, and took fire, like a less gentle man.

"I never *thought* of it!" blazed back the preacher. "If I had, I should undoubtedly have done so. I have my cousin's interests to protect. Nothing else matters to me beside those. I could not have a charlatan — an adventurer — assuming and sustaining the position which you hold in this house."

The doctor waved these words off with a gesture whose dignity impressed itself upon the preacher even in that agitated moment.

"You would be quite right," he replied with unexpected self-possession. "I should not blame you. . . . I suppose," he added, wheeling, "Frost told you this?"

Mr. Hart, too, got to his feet. He made no reply to this question, and the eyes of the two men met poignantly. Then the preacher said: —

"Would it matter who discovered the fact — if it were a fact? If it be a fact?"

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"He is capable of it," mused the doctor, looking into the fire more drearily than angrily. "I might have thought of it — I did n't, that's all. . . . Mr. Hart!" He turned his marred face with a pathetic movement, half appeal, half pain. "Mr. Hart! The time has come, I see, when I must answer your questions — some of them, at least. We both belong to the confessional professions. I ought to be able to trust you. Do you demand my confidence?"

"I demand nothing," returned the preacher, quickly.

"Will you accept it, then?"

The preacher hesitated. "I can't put myself under bonds —" he argued hurriedly. "You must see that. All I can say is: I have never betrayed a human soul — that I can remember — in my life."

"It can't be helped, at any rate," replied the doctor, wearily. "There is no other way. I must risk it. If you will be seated, Mr. Hart? Thank you. I am rather lame to conduct a difficult conversation on my feet. Are the doors all shut? Where is Mrs. Dane?"

Mr. Hart looked out into the hall, and closed and locked the office door again.

"I think she must be upstairs with Joyce," he said. He returned to his chair before the office

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fire. The doctor sat looking into it. It was some moments before he spoke.

It was half an hour, it was an hour, it was two, but the interchange of voices in the office did not cease. Some time after ten o'clock, Carolyn came down to put out the gas and go up to bed. Suddenly the office door opened, and she heard her cousin saying gently :—

“How much time do you want?”

“How can I tell you?” returned the doctor. “It may be a month; it might be a day.”

Then Sterling Hart came through the doorway with bowed head. His manner indicated emotion so great that Cara shrank back, afraid to speak to him. But he took a step or two, and approached her silently. Without a word he stretched his arms above her head—not touching her—as if he blessed her; as a priest, and as a man, and as a kinsman; as if he blessed her altogether and forever; and so, still mute, he left her. In that moment she had seen his noble face; and that it rained with tears.

Now, the evening and the morning were the next day. The storm was spent. It was a shining day, and blossomed like a white, hot rose. It was the national Memorial Day, as it befell, and Carolyn had been early to the churchyard, taking her

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boy and her flowers with her. This made her late at her day's work, and she left Joyce, as her habit was, in Kathleen's quite trustworthy care, and hurried away, disregarding the child's peremptory demand "to see some soiljers," without her usual attention to his fixed ideas.

Dr. Royal (to whom she offered that day an abstracted greeting, as if the anniversary had detached her altogether from him) paid his early morning call on Solomon Hops, and was about to proceed upon his rounds, when a change of purpose took him ; he left his horse at his office hitching-post, and made across the lawn of the Sterling place towards the house of Mr. Hart, musing as he walked. As he leisurely approached the ravine and the iron bridge he heard, or fancied that he heard, a scream, followed by another, and another, each cleaving the May morning like a rapier, and seeming to him like a succession of mortal stabs. The lame man limped into a chaotic run, and hobbled up — slowly, at his best — in time to meet the preacher coming towards him rapidly. Mr. Hart in his coffin will be no grayer than he was at that monstrous moment.

In his arms he clasped a little shrinking figure. It was Cara's boy.

"What is it?" demanded the doctor. "Let me have him! Let me have him — quickly!"

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But the preacher held his little kinsman to his leaping heart. The motion was automatic and imperious.

"He fell," gasped Sterling Hart. "He was coming to find me, I think. He slipped and rolled — off — off —" He shivered, and hid his eyes upon the sobbing child.

"Not *there*?"

Dr. Royal pointed to the chasm with a finger that shook like a ribbon in a gale.

"He fell, and rolled — his little clothes caught somewhere — I think it was the leather belt — he was hanging — over the — over the — when I found him. There was a break in the railing we put up after Timothy George — nobody knew it. I was out walking. It just happened so; that is all."

"Give him to me!" insisted the physician, with a formidable look. "You should not yield to any feeling you have — any impulse or affection till we know — God! Don't you see Joyce is in convulsions? Give me — that is — the child, I say!"

The preacher's mighty arms surrendered the boy to the doctor, who laid him on the grass and examined him in absolute silence. After a few moments he lifted the lad jealously again to his own breast, and the two men walked on with their shuddering little burden.

In the May morning they looked at each other.

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Their eyes said: "Which of us must tell her?" "What will this do to *her*?" They had gone but a short and difficult distance when they met Kathleen running and panting.

"It was but the drop of me eyelash, the twist of me head," argued Kathleen, "an' when I turns the tail of me eye, he was not forninst me. He'd been that crazy over them soldiers since the drums begun. He says, 'Mr. Cousin Sterling Hart'll show me some soiljers—' Mother of Heaven! Mother of God!" cried Kathleen. She gave one glance at the writhing child, threw her apron over her head, and dropped upon the grass. The two men strode on.

When they approached the cottage they stopped and stood irresolute. A woman's figure, draped in translucent black, moved uneasily about the grounds, and a woman's voice—the tenderest in all the world of women that either the physician or the preacher knew—was calling with penetrating sweetness:—

"Joyce? Joyce? My baby! My little man! Where is mother's precious boy?"

From the village churchyard, a mile away, the throb of military music, like the beat of a heart, pulsated plainly, and seemed to answer her. Now the bugle was calling taps above the soldiers' graves, where the living had left all they had to

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give the dead,—their flowers and their tears. But Joyce did not hear the “soiljers.” Without a wound, without a break, without a bruise upon his perfect little body, the child, smitten by terror and shock, passed from convulsion to convulsion in the doctor’s arms.

CHAPTER XVII

CAROLYN crept, leaning upon one elbow. She had put the child into her own bed at the first, and there, on the edge of the broad mattress, she had lain day and night. The sleeve of her loose white gown was worn through to her bare flesh from the constraint and persistence of her position. She was able in this way at once to watch the boy's face and to hold his hand while he slept; so to foretell, by the tightening of little fingers on her own, the advance of the throes in which he would awake.

Outside of the sickroom it was laughing June. For three weeks the child had floated between life and death, as the little flags on the soldiers' graves fluttered and fell with wind or calm upon their fragile staffs. The flowers were ashes upon the mounds, but the small human soul clung to its rights in its racked body. Brain fever with complications, superinduced by shock, were ominous words. The mother listened to them dully. It did not seem to her to matter what they called it. Nothing mattered. The child would die; that was all. Nothing could save him. Consultants from

the city came and went. She listened stupidly to what they said. Dr. Royal would understand. She turned to Dr. Royal. Carolyn's natural courage had quite forsaken her in this last extremity. She had reached the point of endurance where a woman ceases to hope, or even to struggle for any form of happiness, since fate has denied her so many, and accepts as her lot that reiteration of sorrow which we find to be the portion of certain lives. All the optimism of the situation came from the nature of Charles Royal. All the will power, all the hope concentrated upon the sinking boy, were his. He had held the flickering life in the hollow of his hand. For three weeks he had not known a night's rest or a day's relief. He watched the disease as a burning glass observes a piece of scorching paper. Sometimes it seemed to shrivel, whether before his professional skill or his personal absorption. Then the lad subtly lost more than he gained, and the unequal contest set in again. The physician did not yield his case by the width of a wearied moment, or the weakness of a diverted purpose. Carolyn had no heart to wonder at the tenacity of his determination to save the patient, or at his affection for the child; but she was steadily and acutely conscious of both.

Now, with the breadth of the little lad's bed between them, they sat, she on its edge, he on a

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chair at the other side. It was a warm evening, and all the windows were flung wide. There was but one light in the sickroom, and that, shaded from the little patient, embossed the doctor's face and head and hands in a soft illumination against the shadow of a screen. The screen was black, and its embroidery gold. Carolyn could see that one of his hands was clenched; the other played along the boy's pulse like a listening finger on an invisible flute,—a magical instrument, which offered music, but did not yield it.

The "sorryfool man" looked older than usual. It seemed to Mrs. Dane that he had aged rapidly within the last few weeks. His hair was a shade whiter; the hollows in his cheeks were gaunt. His gray beard drooped at the corners of his mouth, and she was sure that his unseen lips trembled. Her wasted eyes traversed the familiar map of his face. Perhaps for the first time it occurred to her that there were spaces upon it marked "unexplored." Certain sacred words forced themselves upon her imagination, and her thought repeated them, not irreverently:—

"For his visage was so marred, more than any man."

How brutally that wreck had treated him! A dark scar ran across his forehead and his temple; one of his cheeks was quite defaced. The strain

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of his battle for the life of her child, the long-drawn vigil, the lost vitality, and the sensitive anxiety which she could not deceive herself in thinking that he had experienced — these had emphasized his physical defects and deformities. His hoarse voice was fainter than she had ever known it; more raucous, more unpleasant to the ear. She had never seen him limp so much as he did now. Her haggard eyes absorbed every feature, every gesture of the disfigured and exhausted man.

“He stands between me and the worst,” she thought.

Her hurt heart crawled towards him as a wounded creature seeks the only shelter it can find. She leaned to him with the passion of pity which only tender women know for unselfish, unattractive men. Cara thought: “If you were well, and strong, and handsome, and fortunate, I should not care so much.”

A clock in the room ticked gently, and the boy stirred.

“Has n’t he slept a good while?” his mother asked.

“Longer than at any time before.”

“What did Dr. Strang say?”

“Oh, he agreed with the rest.”

“Does n’t he think there is *any* hope?”

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"Why do you ask me these questions?"

"What did he say to you when you were alone together?"

"The usual things. He advised anodynes, and so forth."

"Have you given them?"

"No."

"Do you mean to give them?"

"No."

Carolyn looked at the child. Her face worked.

"Do you want Dr. Strang to take the case? I should not blame you. You are trusting me very far."

"I shall trust you farther, — to the uttermost, to the end."

Although subdued conversation did not disturb the boy, but tended rather to soothe him (so large a part had the element of terror taken in his disorder), yet they had been speaking in the lowest whispers, scarcely articulate. Their own voices sounded unreal to them. The physician did not reply to Mrs. Dane's last words. His emotion overcame him, and he made no effort to conceal that it did so, but averted his scarred face from her. His finger crept back to the child's pulse.

"He is still sleeping!" breathed Carolyn.

The doctor glanced at his watch. "Almost an hour more than at any time before."

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Her eyes ran to the little wrist where the trained finger tip rested as lightly as a leaf.

"Stronger," he whispered, "a little. More even, I think."

Across his disfigured face a frail smile stirred. Carolyn's courage took fire from it. She sat with held breath, as if the child's life—still a part of her own being—would exhale with the action of her lungs. Her eyes sought the physician eagerly. But his cautiously replied.

Now, when Mrs. Dane turned her head, Kathleen at the door was standing with hot soup, and beckoning to the doctor.

"You, too," he said; and Carolyn followed him. Kathleen took the watcher's place beside the boy, and the two sat down in the hall. There was a divan beneath the window, and a small light table. They put the cups of soup upon the table, and sipped comfortably; they had never taken a meal together, and both remembered the fact. Carolyn felt curiously comforted, as a woman does by the domestic atmosphere in her saddest moments. This had suddenly and subtly become something lighter and brighter than a sad moment.

"Is there any chance?" she asked outright.

"Do not be too sure of it," he parried gently.

"It seems to me possible; that's all I can say."

"If Joyce should get well—" Panting, she set

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her cup down. "I think I would never complain of anything, never ask for anything again. It would be . . . so much happiness. I should not know how to . . . bear it."

"Do you mean," demanded the doctor, unexpectedly, "that there would be no room left in you for any other happiness? Of any other kind, I mean."

His lowered voice took for the first time since they had been together the tone which no woman can mistake. Carolyn's eyes fled before the concentration of his.

"If the little fellow should live — could you not bear any more joy? Would that exhaust your capacity? You could be very happy, you know. Power to be glad is measured by power to suffer. And you —"

He stopped. Carolyn lifted her trembling face. Before she could check herself her innermost, uttermost soul sprang to her lips.

"His poor father!" she said. "His poor father!"

The doctor did not answer. He regarded her solemnly. The child waked, calling faintly, and the two returned to the sickroom together.

The doctor did not leave it again until morning. He expelled the mother from the room peremptorily, ordered her to go to sleep, and him-

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self watched the night out. When Carolyn came back, the June morning was in the room. Birds were singing everywhere. The pale, pearl-pink dawn tinged the cheeks of the sleeping child. His forehead was moist; his curls lay close upon it in pretty rings. One hand closed about the doctor's finger. The physician gently loosened the clasp, and rose. He stood shining against the tall, black screen. He limped across the room softly, and took Mrs. Dane's hands in both of his. She stood flooded in his emotion and her own.

"There was a change at three o'clock," he said, "when the tide turned to come in. The worst symptoms are under control of the last remedy. If it holds — if it lasts — I think " — he choked.

Before Carolyn could speak he had raised her hand to his lips, and she felt them quivering upon it.

The doctor did not watch the next night, but he did not leave the house. To Mrs. Dane's suggestion that he should occupy a comfortable bed in one of her empty rooms (for he was wasted with vigil) he returned a quick refusal, and went downstairs.

"I'm all right on the office sofa," he said. "I shall stay there, as I have done before."

He slept, and heavily, for no emergency disturbed him. The child fared well. Carolyn took

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her turn at watching, but was scarcely needed. Joyce passed from one sane, sweet sleep to another, and with the second daybreak his mouth curled into a smile, and from it the dearest word in the world stole out quite distinctly: —

“Mum — mumma?”

Carolyn dared not kiss, and could not cry, but she lay upon the ragged elbow of her white gown, and put her cheek to his. When the doctor came in she rose and stood, — a statue of rapture. She could have knelt at his feet, and knew that she could. Perhaps he had some consciousness of what was thrilling in her, for he extended his hand involuntarily, as if to check the expression of her gratitude.

The June day had a celestial gentleness. The sunrise warmed without the window and within the room. The child put out his little fingers as if he would grasp the light, laughed softly, and slept again. The doctor moved unsteadily towards the bed.

Now, at that moment, the collie came thumping up the stairs, and Mrs. Dane, fearing the effect of the disturbance in the sickroom, hurried out to send the dog away. This proved to be a matter of some moments. It was necessary to persuade Clyde or to convince him that he was not wanted (never under any circumstances an easy task), and

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in the end she was obliged to take him by the collar and tug him downstairs. When she returned, stepping without sound in her knit woolen slippers, the doctor was sitting in her place upon the empty side of the bed. He did not see her; he did not hear her; and as she stood upon the threshold, hesitating, she perceived that his arm had crept beneath the child, and that his tears were storming upon the pillow. Faintly to her ears there came these smothered words:—

“Joy! Joyce! *My little boy! Papa's sonny boy!*”

Then he lifted his wet, disfigured face. Carolyn stood staring upon him. He gently withdrew his arm, got to his feet, and made as if he would leave the room, but fell back that she might precede him. In the hall they confronted each other.

“Cara!” he said, “*don't you know me — after all?*”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE great miracles of the healing art are the quiet ones. The boy was now sleeping more soundly than at any moment hitherto. A deep renewal of brain and body had passed upon him. Only his gentle, even breathing could be heard in the solemn stillness of the house.

The two in the hall stood looking upon each other, as two might who had met in the after life that follows pain, and joy, and trust, and love, and all the mere emotions of an unreal earth. Both were as gray as the dead; but the woman in her long white gown acquired an added pallor from the circumstance of it. She was the first to speak.

“Dr. Royal, will you repeat what you said to me—just now? I am pretty tired,—and you,—you have not slept. We are neither of us quite ourselves. I should not wish to . . . wrong you . . . in any way.”

She uttered the words gently, as one speaks to a person mentally confused. It was plain to him that her instinct was to treat him as though he had given utterance to some temporary but unpardonable hallucination.

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"I have said it," he replied with a terrible brevity. "I am your husband. I am Chanceford Dane."

She retreated from him with an evasive, pitying glance.

"My husband — you know that — is dead. He is buried in Balsam Cemetery. I put flowers on his grave the day that Joyce — that Joyce — Go and rest!" she urged compassionately. "You have exhausted yourself — for our sake. You are starving for sleep. Go — go, and feed the famine of your brain. Then —"

"Only one thing can feed my famine," he made answer to her. "I am your husband. I am your husband, Chanceford Dane. I know that I have forfeited my right to be believed. You must do as you choose about that. But, as God lives, I am telling you the truth. That poor fellow yonder in the churchyard . . . whom you cried over that day when you took the flowers . . . is my little brother Clay."

"Come downstairs," said Carolyn, quietly. "I will call Kathleen to stay with Joyce. Get on the office sofa, and sleep, Dr. Royal. You must, — do you see? You must! It is more necessary than you understand."

"If you call Kathleen — just yet — I shall tell her. I shall tell everybody. Cara! stand where you are and listen to me. I will speak . . . at last. I

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tell you I *will* speak, and you shall listen. Cara! *Cara!* Look at me. Don't turn away so *soon*. Look back. Lift your eyes. Don't you know me in spite of all? Don't you see *anything* about me that you can recognize if you try, — if you should want to try?"

In a silence crueler than any words she shook her head.

"Oh, I know what a wreck I am! A shattered, grotesque thing; a mask; a gargoyle! Even my voice — if my voice had been left me, I could not have carried it out. But I thought — I hoped — if I told you (I always meant to tell you, when I dared) that you would find something in me that would remind you . . . Cara! Look! Look again! Don't you see? *Can't* you see?"

She turned her head and obeyed him slowly. Her eyes searched his marred face, lighted now by brilliant, insomniac eyes; traversed his gaunt figure; took note of every physical defect and deformity that had ravaged him. Not a feature, not a contour recalled the beauty, the grace, the scintillant face and frame which had held the debonair soul of Chanceford Dane. She did not speak.

"Now I understand," he said, "how dead people feel. I never did before. They come into their old homes; nobody knows it; nobody knows them. I

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have always pitied them. They must be an uncomfortable lot for a while."

Something in the whimsical words — what was it? — for a startled instant reminded her of Dane. That glint in his dark eyes, burning through the solemnity of the situation, stabbed her like a fine electric needle. Chanceford never tolerated the intense; he always threw it off as soon as he could. Few tragedies but yielded to his sense of humor. His wilful voracity for joy had remained with her as the most memorable thing about him. In the forced merriment of that moment something leaped from the being of the man to hers. She received a current of mystery charged with a thousand volts of emotion. It seemed to her that either ecstasy or annihilation hung upon the instant. Old remembered hours, old forgotten things, closed and crashed about her. Smitten half with terror, half with joy, her lifted face received the impact of his personality. Her brain began to reel.

"It is not he who is delirious," she thought. "It must be I."

She thrust up her hands to clasp her forehead, as one does in a moment of unbearable mental confusion. As she did so she felt one of them seized. Before she could withdraw it, he had kissed her arm. His lips sought and found the ragged elbow of her white gown, where love, and grief,

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and watching, had worn the muslin through,—and there rested on her, warm and shrinking.

Carolyn gasped and swayed. The disfigured face, the crippled body, the shattered voice had not betrayed him. His flesh had become the prison of his soul, and hers had given her no key. But before his touch the heart of the wife stopped. She swayed and fell. She was not a fainting woman, but for this second, as for that first time when Dane took her from the Country Club after Clyde had turned upon his tormentor, she drifted away. He caught and laid her upon the divan where they had been sitting. When her mind anchored, she was lying on the bed in her husband's old room,—that which he had occupied when their estrangement began. She herself had always retained the one that they had shared.

The doctor was sitting beside her, and Kathleen was in the room. It was now broad, bright day. The child called from the sickroom.

“Go, Kathleen!” the doctor said. “Sit with him until I come. Mrs. Dane has had an ill turn. She has watched too long.”

The two were left in a silence which ached about them. She could not, and he did not break it. He did not touch her again. Presently he said, as if nothing had happened, “Lie quietly. Stay where you are. I must go to Joy.”

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At the old, familiar baby name, forbidden to her lips since the year her husband died, the color splashed on Carolyn's ashen face. She struggled up against the pillows and watched the doctor limping from the room. Her head swam so that she laid it back and closed her starting eyes.

The doctor remained with the child and did not immediately return; when he did so, his morning office hour had struck, and patients were clamoring for him downstairs. Kathleen was in the room with a breakfast tray. The girl's presence checked the natural movement of a tremendous situation. Carolyn said, "I will go at once and sit with Joyce."

And the doctor answered, "Are you able? Are you sure?" as if nothing had occurred.

He went to his morning's work methodically. The day set in like any other day, and moved prosaically along. Nannie Hops ran in to ask what she could do. Mrs. Marriot stopped in driving by, to offer her horses, "if Mrs. Dane would take a mouthful of air." Mrs. Marriot had invited a phalanx of the Salvation Army to a lawn party at her house that afternoon; but the horses would be free till luncheon; she urged the ride upon Mrs. Dane. Sterling Hart came over anxiously and early to inquire for the child. Carolyn lay upon the little fellow's bed, and denied herself to all her world.

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It occurred to her that she had to reckon with it, sometime, somehow. It suggested itself to her that, if the claim which this man of mystery put upon her were genuine, the world's attitude towards it could not be ignored; perhaps not even scorned. Her whirling brain already perceived that she was like a swimmer caught in a long, deep seine—entangled, whatever happened, almost beyond hope of rescue; she could not sink; she could not rise; the meshes were tight upon her hands, her feet, and strangling at her throat. She saw that, whatever course she should pursue, she might be forced into a position either false or fatal. The necessity of concealment, even for the sake of throwing off concealment, was hateful to her. Her instinctive candor, her translucent nature, recoiled violently. In all her sweet, white life there had never been anything in her conduct which she must disguise, or allow to appear as other than it was. It seemed to her intolerable that she must sustain for one hour a position she might, or might not—God knew!—be able to explain to all the world. At first the woman was stronger than the widow in her.

As the day progressed, her consciousness of danger surmounted almost every other sense of her situation, except that of the insolence of events. This grew into something incredible, when

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hour upon hour moved on, and the impending interview between herself and Dr. Royal was frustrated at every point. Nannie returned and came upstairs without permission. Nannie had great news; for she was engaged to her dentist after all. Carolyn listened dully. Nannie was grieved at her friend's attitude towards the most wonderful thing in the world; her pretty New England profile drooped when Mrs. Dane said apathetically:—

“Why should a woman ever marry anybody?”

Downstairs Sterling Hart sat stolidly waiting for a rift in his cousin's obdurate seclusion. Joyce was restless, and only an omnipresent mother could suffice him. Then a mortal case demanded the doctor. It was afternoon before he could hew his way through the blockade of daily life, and seek her; as he did.

Now, peremptorily, he put Kathleen on duty in the sickroom, and in a tone that admitted of no reprieve he said:—

“Mrs. Dane must rest. I shall take Mrs. Dane downstairs for a while.”

It seemed terrible to Carolyn that he should be giving reasons and excuses, keeping up the subterfuge in teeth of such delusion as possessed him. She obeyed him reluctantly. He led her into his office and shut (she noticed that he locked) the door. Then his formidable manner fell from

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him instantly and utterly, and he stood before her like a culprit. She could see that he drooped in every nerve and muscle.

"Well," he began, "what have you to say?"

"I am here to listen, not to speak," said Carolyn, coldly.

"You should be merciful — if nothing more."

"You must be explicit — if nothing more."

"I cannot be less. I wish to be more. If you would give me a chance —" He stood panting.

"It is an incredible claim — that which you make. You do not seem to realize how unbelievable it is, though a woman . . . even if she wanted to believe it. You do not seem to understand the position in which you place me — you, whoever you are, whatever you are. Your story is so . . . unreal, so unlikely. On the face of it, why *should* I believe it? Nothing in fiction or on the stage could be more unnatural."

"Life is more extraordinary than any replica of life," he answered quickly. "You should know that."

"Oh, I know," she returned wearily, "that such things sometimes happen. I have heard of them, of course — now and then. I never knew anybody to whom they did happen."

All the conventional in Carolyn's nature rose to the surface; family position and tradition; ex-

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perience of the commonplace and the accepted — these comfortable facts only one thing had ever disturbed. Her father's death, and the wretched way of it, had, in a measure, prepared her to understand that fate did not swerve from the third rail of its terrible track for East Shore society. Suddenly she felt herself old and disillusioned. It occurred to her that anything might happen to her — mystery, melodrama, or a preposterous and tragic joy.

"I do not present my claim without evidence," said the doctor, abruptly. "I have all . . . that sort of thing."

He unlocked a drawer in his desk and tore out a mass of papers; these he tossed about and laid in her lap.

"My diploma is here. See! The certificate of the medical examiners in this state (I had the notion to get that, too, after I graduated); army records, journals, personal accounts; an order from my surgeon to come and help him in the hospital. They found out that I knew something, and kept me at it. Letters and more letters! These are from Balsam patients. That is from Sterling Hart. And here—" From a carefully sealed package he broke the wax and laid in her hand her own letters written to him while he was at the front. "There was a great deal more of it,

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but it got lost in the scuffle. These I managed to hold on to through everything."

"These have not been in the water," said Carolyn, quickly, "and you were, a good while."

"That is clever of you," he said, smiling drearily. "A man could not fool you if he wanted to."

He threw his head back with a merry gesture which it almost seemed to her she could recall.

"No, I did not trust my papers to that coaster; in November, too. I had sent them North before then. But that is the least of it."

Carolyn rose suddenly and dropped everything from her lap except her own letters; these her fingers instinctively clutched.

"When a man is dead," she said, "under such conditions his papers may fall into anybody's hands."

"Very well," said the doctor, dully. He turned, and limped to the window.

"If I could take advice!" cried Carolyn. "If I could tell anybody! If I could talk with Cousin Sterling —"

"Talk with your Cousin Sterling!" urged the doctor, wheeling. "Show him everything. Tell him everything; he has seen it all; he has heard it all. He is satisfied with the proofs of my claim. *He* does n't take me for a worse scoundrel than I am."

"Does n't he?" asked Carolyn, stupidly.

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Her hand crept to her pocket and hid her letters there. They were few and worn and yellow. Her fingers closed upon them convulsively.

"Don't you see?" she gasped. "Don't you see what this means? If this is true? If you are what you say you are? . . . If a man treats a woman — treats a wife like that — why, you have deserted me!" She broke into dry, dreadful sobs. "Oh, I had rather you had died! I had rather you had died!"

She whirled, and turned the key, and fled from him.

All the rest of that day she denied herself to him. But for the illness of the boy he was sure she would have left the house. Only the tenuous thread of that little life held the two beneath the same roof. Had it not been for the child, he felt that she would have judged him without defense.

In the evening he sent up these words to her: —

"It is necessary that I should finish my story. Let us have it over with at once. After that, do with me as you will. Leave Joy with Kathleen, and come down."

The message was written in his own hand, and signed C. D. She obeyed the summons, as he had thought she would. She did not speak. They sat down on opposite sides of the office table.

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"Have you sent for Hart?" he began.

"No."

"Are you going to?"

"Not yet. Nobody, no third person, can help us. When I have heard what you have to say I will decide what I ought to do."

He perceived, or he thought he did, that Carolyn's whole nature was suffering from something akin to that which surgeons call shock when they deal with the effects of a physical accident. She was both gashed and stunned. Her gentlest instincts were in a state of collapse. Her excitement was visibly increasing, and the doctor's composure grew as hers declined.

"I will make it as short as I can," he said quietly. "It is n't a very long story, anyhow. But it is a little complicated, like a novel where the plot has run away with the hero. You are perfectly right; we will not clip the truth; we will have it down to the roots. I *did* desert you, if you choose to call it so. I don't suppose it is possible to convince you that I did not mean to do it at the first. . . .

"I was a pretty miserable chap, anyhow you look at it, when I enlisted. A man is, when he goes wrong; there is n't much fun in it. I had gone wrong, but then, you see, I'd been wronged. It was n't just as you thought it was. A man can't

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explain at the expense of a woman ; that's the code. I'm not so sure it is n't a damnable code on occasions."

"When my husband was dead, and everybody thought she was dying—a woman confessed to me," interrupted Carolyn, "that I had been . . . mistaken."

"Oh, she did, did she?" queried the doctor. "I wondered what she wanted of you." He showed but little interest in the matter, and drummed upon the table with his long, thin fingers.

"I got to feeling pretty bitter, and all that—thought about marriage the way a man does when his has failed. I don't deny—I won't keep back any part of the price of it all—that I had times of thinking I'd like to get out of it; for your sake more than for mine. I used to reason: 'She would be better off.' Then poor Clay turned up in that accursed war—it was just one of the desperate chances that we met at all—and that gave me something else to think about. I don't know that I mentioned Clay, did I? But I wrote you, did n't I? I meant to."

"Sometimes," said Carolyn, cautiously, "I had letters from my husband."

"You see Clay had that white lock, too," proceeded the doctor, as if he had not heard her. "The older he grew, the more it seemed to show,

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for he never got gray at all. He looked a great deal like me, too, when he outgrew his youth, his first youth. The resemblance was very marked. I would n't have believed it possible. We had three or four good hours together, in spite of all, at odd times. He was terribly shattered . . . poor Clay! He went down at San Juan. He was in the charge. And so was I. I was half blown to atoms. It was n't the wreck so much; that only finished what the shell began. But I was nearly shot to pieces. You see I was hit in the throat (that did my voice up); but my head was the worst — delirious for I don't know how long. Nobody knows; it settled into amnesia — one of those cases of alteration of personality, when a fellow forgets who he is. After hospital, I went — God knows where; and I did — God knows what. My opinion is I sent the package North about that time.

“One day I looked up and saw that I was working in an orange grove in Florida. There were the everglades, and the darkies, and the oranges blazing on the squat trees. I went into the house and asked the man who owned it — he was a nice fellow, graduated at Princeton — if he had any Northern papers. He kept them on file, the way people do, you know, in dull places, where nothing happens, and I read them every one. That's how I found it out. I read about my funeral in Bal-

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sam Cemetery, and all the rest of it. 'Well,' I said, 'she is rid of me now. It's the best thing could have happened to her.' Besides" . . .

"Besides what?" asked Cara, with dry, judicial eyes.

"Why, I was still drinking, that's the upshot of it. Army life does n't help a fellow that way. And then I'd had a pretty hard time — not that I want to excuse myself, — for anything."

"Go on," said Mrs. Dane. She sat with her face averted from him; the white splashes that had settled about her mouth were extending slowly. The feeling recurred to her that he and she might have been two ghosts comparing notes on the history of a closed existence.

"I said, 'I won't go back to be a burden to her — to disgrace her. Since I'm dead, I'll *stay* dead — awhile, anyhow.' It was quite a time before it occurred to me that I might . . . I might disgrace you in some other way. You are so young, so beautiful, still. And I knew how a man would feel about you. One day I came to my senses, what there was left of them, and I said, 'You've been a fool long enough. Go home. Go North the first chance and tell her.' I meant to, Cara! I meant to, from my soul!"

"Go on," repeated Carolyn. "I am listening. I hear everything you say."

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"There's one thing," interpolated the doctor, "before I forget it. It seems to belong just here. I had been studying—that's the curious part of it—all that while I was dissociated from my personality—that is, when I did n't know myself. Anything else I knew except my own history. I had forgotten that I ever practiced medicine; but the odd thing was, I meant to practice medicine; I studied all my spare moments. That surgeon I spoke of had lent me some books. He was n't like the rest; he belonged to the new faith; they slip through sometimes, even among the cut-and-dried, even in the army. I studied his *materia medica*. I read, and read, and read. You know how I used to hate my profession? How I used to scribble, and play the violin, and hanker after a literary life, and all that nonsense? You could n't understand—no layman could—how I despaired of curing the sick on the basis where I stood. I never respected my own *materia medica*. When I found one that I could trust, and found that it did what it claimed to be able to do, I began over again in dead earnest. In spite of everything, it has been a joy to knuckle down to work. I've found something—got *something* left in my spoiled life; even if I have lost—you."

He lifted his head with a dignity before which Carolyn's drooped; but she did not speak.

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“The worst of it was the dipsomania, Cara. A man can find a lost memory—a lost mind, if you will—more easily than he can lose a fixed appetite. It fluctuated as all disorders do. There were times,—I will not keep anything from you, girl,—there may be yet. I can’t guarantee that the war is over in me. All I can say is, I’ve found my colors, and I’ve learned how to fight; how not to run under fire, and the tactics of it. When I came North in that coaster I had made up my mind what I would do. The first thing I meant to try my luck with you; I meant to tell you the whole story. After that—”

“I should like to know where you sent the papers?” asked Carolyn, without a sign of emotion.

“Why, to Dipdown. I expressed them to that old hotel—you know—where we went—”

A low, choking sound, half a cry and half suffocation, escaped her.

“They were left there indefinitely to be called for. It was the strangest thing. I had forgotten everything else—who I was and where I lived; but I remembered Dipdown. I remembered that cottage near the hotel, with the open fire and the roses. When the time came, I went up and got the things. They had the address of Charles Royal on them; I had got the name fastened on

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me, somehow, so I held to it. I went into a fisherman's house there, one of the mountain fishermen, and caught trout for a living. I fished and lived out of doors, and drank cold water and warm milk and fought with beasts at Ephesus, till I got the upper hand of myself. That was after I got out of the Balsam hospital. I have n't touched a drop since I came from Dipdown. I don't pretend to say . . . but I have n't, so far. That's all. You can form your own opinion of my chances."

"I can form my opinion of your conduct!" said Carolyn, suddenly slipping into a bitter wail. "A man who is shipwrecked at his wife's feet — knowing everything — all she has suffered — and does not tell her, does not tell her even then!"

"You shuddered when you saw me," urged the doctor, piteously. "I was pretty far gone. But if I *had* been dead I should have known you. You came up and looked at me. I felt that I was horrible to you — the way I looked, the flotsam that I was; I lost my pluck. I said, 'I can't risk it — not now.' I suppose I was a coward. I'd rather have faced the charge at San Juan again than to face *you*. Now that I have done it," added the "sorryfool man," with conviction, "I don't know but I should have stood a better chance then. Should I?"

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"Go on," repeated Carolyn. "Finish your story. Explain everything you can."

"There is n't much left of it," replied the doctor, shrinking. "I have covered the most necessary points, haven't I? After all, it is n't anything I can *say* that is going to weigh with you. You know I am naturally an outright, downright fellow. I did n't realize when I got myself into this scrape how hard it would be to play a rôle. There have been some dangerous breaks. Douce Marriot was very shrewd — you know she is; she half suspected me of being an adventurer while she was getting over the pneumonia. Then Nannie — you remember, don't you? I left my old violin at Solomon's — forgot to take it away when we were married. One night I came across it in the hall closet where I hung my coats. I could not help it; I took it out, and began to play — it was very rash. I played that old thing you used to like so much, —

'Oh, promise me that you will take my hand,
The most unworthy in this lonely land.'

"She came in and heard me, and she stood stock still. 'That is Dr. Dane's violin,' she said. 'Why do you touch it? I would rather that you did n't touch it. Why, you play like a dead man!' Nannie said.

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“Then there was Clyde. If he could speak English he would have given me away a hundred times. I don’t think he suspected me in the least, drenched in all that salt water. But when he met me on the street, the day I came home — you did n’t see that. He growled at first; you know he never liked me. Then he screamed, and *screamed*. I thought he would have knocked me over. After that, he seemed to pity me.

“Then one night I went to town to hear Sterling Hart preach, and a fellow came in and sat beside me, and I saw that it was Timothy George. He was in the charge at San Juan, you know — perhaps you don’t know. Well, he was, and I guess he never swallowed the story. He was in Clay’s regiment. He tried to sound me that night there in the church. But he did n’t make much headway; although my opinion is, he had run across me and my scars in the hospital or somewhere. He had never seen me since my hair went to ashes, and it puzzled him. I told you, did n’t I, that when I looked in the glass that day in Florida — the day after I read the papers — I found it snow-white? I don’t know when it turned, any more than you do. Timothy told your cousin whatever notions he had got in his head, and Hart came down on me — that night in the office, you remember. I had to tell him everything —

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there was n't any other way out of it. I never meant that anybody should hear it first. I meant to give you your rights, so far as that went. It was the only one I had left to give you. Is there anything more you want to know?" asked the doctor. He rose abruptly and stood before her.

It was terrible to her to see that he winced so, as if her very being had become a flaming sword that hewed him down. His voice sank.

"What I have been saying, Cara, is the least of it all. These are little things between yourself and me. They only go about so far to prove my claim, and there they stop. There are—other things that I could say. Before the courts of heaven I could plead my case, but in earth or heaven no living ear but yours can hear that evidence. It is not of a nature that I can force upon you. When you are ready to listen to me, let me know."

Carolyn had risen, too, and stood staggering before him. Now she thrust out both her hands as if he were the judge, and she the culprit, and so pleaded before him.

"Let me think! Oh, let me think! Give me time—a little more! For that would mean—for that would mean—" she stopped.

"Calm yourself," said the doctor, "Be as quiet as you can. You shall have all the time you want.

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I must go up and see Joy now. Stay where you are. I will be back presently."

His slow, laborious step climbed the stairs, and she heard it crossing the floor of the child's room. After a short time he came down and put on his hat and coat.

"He is doing remarkably well. He will be quite safe with you and Kathleen. You can telephone if I am needed. I will say good-night."

She echoed the word automatically. "Do you mean to — leave me — so?"

"I must either go or stay," doggedly replied the man. She did not answer, and he moved towards the door. She did not follow him. When he opened the door, she perceived that the shining day had descended to a stormy night. It was raining hard, and drearily. He stepped upon the piazza, and put up his umbrella. She came to the threshold and remonstrated; something about the wet, and how tired out he was; he did not reply. When he had got down the steps, he turned and said, quite in a natural, every-day voice: —

"Send for your cousin. Send for Sterling Hart, and talk it over. He has advised you all your life — remarkably well. The only time you did n't follow his judgment you married me. Whatever comes, I will not be the man to spoil your life a second time. You shall not make another mis-

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take if I can help it. You shan't acknowledge me because you pity me. Take your time, and counsel, Cara — dear."

He slipped into the last word against his will, it seemed, and limped pathetically away. Carolyn stood shaken with an irresolution more pitiable than his pride or his despair. The heart of a wounded woman goes by a strange way, and the man has never lived who could follow the route of it.

"It's raining pretty hard," she faltered.

"Good-night," he gently said.

When he had limped a little distance down the sidewalk, she called him faintly.

"Dr. Royal? Doctor? Doctor!"

But the doctor did not turn. His uneven step thudded on the gravel walk, and lapsed from it. Carolyn shut the door and crawled upstairs to the boy's room.

She got into her white gown, and lay upon the outside of the bed. She looked at the black screen, empty of his presence who had stood there shining the night he saved her child. Her confused eyes traced the pattern of the gold embroidery. This was easier to do than to trace the workings of her own mind and heart. Now a tragic hope, now a taunting pride, swung her to and fro. Curious fears came upon her; womanish, unreasonable worries.

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Suppose he met with some mishap before the morning, some one of the accidents to which physicians are liable, called to emergency cases and driving in the night? Suppose, indeed, he turned and fled from her again? It occurred to her that he was capable of it; it occurred to her that she had parleyed with his forbearance, with his misery, at a cruel leisure. Once, and again, and again, she started to go to the telephone, and recall him to the house. She lay all night with wide eyes, burning into the darkness. Once she turned her arm and glanced at the sleeve on her white elbow; her lips crept towards the ragged spot that his had touched; when she found that they could not reach it, her face blazed, half with a sense of humor, half of shame. At the first gleam of the dawn she ran downstairs and summoned him. He answered his call bell immediately.

"He has been listening for it," she thought. She tried to collect herself, but the receiver shook in her hand.

"Doctor, will you come over? Please?"

"Is Joyce worse?"

"No. Oh, no."

"Has he slept well? Is there any return of the fever?"

"None — none at all. He has slept all night."

"But you wish me to come?"

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"If you will be so good."

"Very well," he said in his ordinary voice. "I will get there as soon as I can."

She was waiting for him downstairs; it seemed to her an intolerable, interminable time before he came limping up the walk in the gray-rose light. She had opened the front door softly, and stood upon the threshold in her crumpled, loving, mother's gown. They passed into the office together, and she shut the door.

"Have you slept?" he began.

"No, have you?"

"Oh, no. Have you communicated with your cousin?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"I don't know. I called him up just now. I asked him to come over by and by. I asked him not to come till after . . . after I had seen you again."

"*Did* you?"

A subtle change passed upon the doctor's sleepless face. His expression could not have been called hope, but it had ceased to be despair.

"I have been thinking," he suggested humbly, "that I ought not to intrude upon your conscience in any way. You used to have a tremendous New England conscience, Cara. You shan't deal with

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me from a sense of duty. And your pity I won't have. I could go away again, Cara . . . if you would rather. I need not stay; I suppose I could start in somewhere else. You need not acknowledge me unless you want to. I could manage somehow . . . now I have seen you."

Then she cried out upon him, and her shaken voice was more piteous than his.

"Tell me! Tell me everything . . . all you meant to say . . . those things that nobody else could hear."

"I *could n't* tell you," he said almost inarticulately, "over there."

"No," she said. "I understand that. I know you could n't."

"My God!" he cried, "would you trust me so far as *that*? Without consulting any one? Without —"

"I shall consult my own soul," said Cara, solemnly. "And yours. There is no other on this earth whom it concerns. I will listen to all you have to say to me —"

"Then you will listen *here*," he warned her.

He held his arms out, all shaking as they were. Without a tremor, as without a blush, she stirred to him. Before he could touch her, she heard the man sob. Then she began to tremble.

"Oh, can you forgive me . . . ever in this

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world? Wait! Wait! Before you tell me any more; before I hear a word of it; I must make you understand — I will trust you first. And you shall tell me afterwards.”

She lifted her lips to his marred face.

In the deepening dawn they sat solemnly while he gathered his strength to offer her the sacred evidence that he had promised. He began by speaking of little things — delicate memories, trifles of their courtship, and betrothal.

“We sat upon the piazza — it was just this hour — and saw the sunrise on the sea. Your father was better, and we could leave him with the nurse. Her name was something colored — Black; Miss Black. You sent Kathleen to bring me sandwiches because I had watched all night. You had on that long gray cloak — it had pink about it — over your white gown; it was edged with some sort of fluttering fur — white; it floated with the motion of your breath. I don’t think you ever had seen a summer sunrise before. The color was upon your face. You looked . . . so beautiful to me. I thought: a man might give his life to win her. I won you, and I ruined mine and yours.

“I never, to this day, have understood how you came to capsize; you’re such a clever sailor. How Clyde pulled you through the surf and fought me

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off! I put you in my buggy, dripping wet. In my office, afterwards, you wore Nannie's dress—gray, with white above. And I told you—you remember what. 'I am in the undertow,' you said. 'Let me drown.'

"At sunset you met me on your father's lawn. You still wore Nannie's dress, half gray, half white. Do you remember what you said about it? Shall I tell you? No? I thought you would remember.

"Clyde wore a white ribbon on our wedding day. You leaned out from the carriage, you leaned away from me, to look back at Clyde. On the cars you talked of all sorts of common things, as if you had met me on an accidental journey. You told me Kathleen was going to marry a bellboy from the hotel. At Dipdown you did not like the mountains. You wanted to go home. You felt happier when you saw I had the cottage ready for you. What big, beautiful mountain fires those were! Don't you remember the roses? . . . I knelt to you, Cara, I knelt at your feet. I was n't a praying fellow, but I prayed. You could n't know *that*. I said, 'Thou God! Make me fit to take her to my life.'"

Cara, in his arms, had ceased to tremble, she had ceased to weep. She lay quite still, and gently she put up her hand, and stroked his wet, disfigured cheek.

They spoke of many things, although it was

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chiefly he who talked and she who listened, for a time. He reminded her of matters that she remembered, and of some that she had forgotten till he spoke of them. He recalled little scenes between them, trifles, the friction or the harmony of married life — what happened on such a day, and what on such another. They spoke of graver things, incidents and episodes, tenderness and coldness, records in the journal of their hapless marriage.

He would say, "Do you remember that? Have you forgotten this?" And she could not gainsay him. They recalled memories precious and holy, known only to themselves. They spoke of the sacredness of marriage, of the rapturous hope with which they had entered upon it, and the despair into which it had betrayed them; of the ever-living power of the sacred bond which they felt so strangely and so strongly holding them together, after all. They spoke of love; of its higher nature, and its other, and of the kind of love remaining possible to them, after their tragic experiment at it; a something bare of all illusion and timorous of joyous promises, a quiet confidence tried as by the fire of life, and not afraid of it because they had known the worst that it could do to them. They spoke of the love that seeketh not itself; the sacrificial love, the only kind that lives in the dying of all the substitutes that mock the name.

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Then Cara spoke — so gently, so humbly, that it was difficult for him to follow the sweet impulse of her heart, so long unknown to him — about the twice-told love that she had cherished for the man; he who had won her first, and then again; he to whom she brought the love of wife and widow too, and laid both with a womanly fervor at his sad feet.

“Oh, you love like a goddess!” he would have cried. “And forgive like a spirit.” But the words failed upon his lips, and all he could say was “Cara! Cara! *Cara!*”

Now, while they sat so, in the broadening, brightening day, in the silent house, whispering and breathing cheek to cheek, the unlocked door turned inward softly, and the preacher stood upon the threshold. His luminous eyes had their priest's and prophet's look. His hands, stretched out before him, uttered the benediction of the soul that forgets itself in the blessedness of another.

Cara slipped to her feet, and advanced to meet him. Dane followed, not timidly, but with his gray head lifted. His marred face was so irradiate that it was the high light of the room.

“Cousin Sterling,” said Cara, in a ringing voice, “please go and tell Kathleen, — and Nannie. Tell everybody, — all the world. Explain it if you can.

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But if you can't, it does not matter. I don't mind any of those — little things."

"I can protect you, I think," said Sterling Hart. "At any rate, I can try. Have you put all your evidence before her?" he demanded, wheeling upon the man.

"Ask her," said Dane.

But the preacher turned his face away.

"God hath joined you together," he answered brokenly. "Who shall put you asunder? Cousin Cara, . . . if you are happy . . . I shall stand between you and all the world."

He raised himself to his commanding height, with his lofty, upward motion of the chin.

Now while the three stood there, something puzzled as to their next word, and not without embarrassment, the child waked and crooned in a pretty singsong from the room above:—

"Mum — mumma? Pup — puppa? Mum — ma?" Cara started and stirred. As she ran up the stairs, the two men heard her calling all the way:—

"Mother is coming to her precious one. Joy! Joy!"

The collie heard the foreign word; he came in and seriously scanned the faces of the superior beings, who regarded him with unusual respect and emotion. In the storming of the human

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drama, who had paused to recognize its dumb unconscious hero?

But the dog retreated haughtily from them, and went with splendid and confident motions up the stairs. Dane had taken a step forward, but fell back.

"After you, Clyde," he said, with his whimsical smile.

The morning moved into the summer day. The tide was racing in. The surf leaped through the great chasm, and spoke in a tongue that no man understood. Only one tried to translate it, and he sat alone upon the cliff's edge, and studied—after all his experience and his wisdom, his power, and purity of heart, and effacement of self—the grammar of life. It seemed to him that he had gone back to the elements of existence, to the difficult, primitive lessons of a man's soul. The preacher watched the tide come in, and surge upon the old, eternal barriers of the granite; madly for the moment, according to the nature of tides.

"Presently," he thought, "it will ebb."

He stayed and watched the pit of foam until it slipped, seething down. Then he lifted his eyes to the sea-line, where the sky met it.

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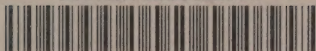
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